AN INVESTIGATION ON THE IMPACT OF CARING LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING IN WEIFANG KINDERGARTEN SCHOOL, CHINA

Qin Honglei

6319002020

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Administration Innovation

Graduate School of Education

Siam University

Academic Year 2026

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Title	An Investigation on the Impact of Caring Leadership on Employee Well-Being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China
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Abstract

Title An Investigation on the Impact of Caring Leadership on Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China

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Degree Doctor of Philosophy

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(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit) (Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit)

This study investigated the mechanisms through which caring leadership influenced employee well-being in kindergartens in Weifang City, Shandong Province, China. The study examined the direct effect of caring leadership on employee well-being and the indirect effects of organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, and employee performance. The study also aimed to provide practical guidance for improving kindergarten management and employee well-being. A mixed-methods research design was adopted. In the quantitative research, Structural Equation Modelling was used to test the hypothesized relationships among the variables. A total of 700 questionnaires were distributed to principals, teachers, and support staff from 25 public and private kindergartens, and 678 valid responses were collected. In the qualitative research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight key informants, and the data were analysed using NVivo to triangulate the quantitative findings.

The study focused on kindergartens across urban and suburban districts in Weifang, with principals representing leadership behaviour and teachers and support staff serving as the main evaluators of organizational outcomes. The results indicated that caring leadership had a significant positive direct effect on employee well-being and strong indirect effects through organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, and employee performance. These mediating variables enhanced teachers' sense of belonging, psychological security, collective efficacy, and professional achievement. The findings enrich the theoretical understanding of leadership and well-being in early childhood education and provided practical implications for kindergarten management.

Keywords: caring leadership, organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, teachers' well-being

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Qin Honglei

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The introduction describes the statement and significance of the problem, research questions, research objectives, research hypotheses, scope of the study, limitations of the study, significance of the study, and definition of terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 Global High Attention to Caring leadership and Preschool Education Quality

In recent years, caring leadership, a leadership style that emphasizes emotional support, interpersonal understanding, and empathy, has attracted growing attention from the international educational community, particularly in the field of basic education. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has emphasized that "high-quality preschool education is inseparable from inclusive, respectful, and supportive leadership" (Abdullahi et al., 2020). According to the 2020 TALIS Starting Strong survey, conducted across 37 countries, approximately 78% of preschool educators reported that care and support from kindergarten principals were crucial factors influencing both their teaching engagement and young children's well-being (McKenna & Jeske, 2020). Empirical evidence further suggests that caring leadership not only enhances teachers' job satisfaction but also exerts a positive influence on children's social behaviour, emotional development, and early learning outcomes. As a result, this leadership style has gradually emerged as a critical pillar for achieving excellence in schools. In educational systems that emphasize equity, diversity, and human-centred management, the role of caring leadership is particularly salient. A longitudinal study of basic education schools in the Asia-Pacific region demonstrated that leaders' humanistic care fosters a positive organizational culture and significantly improves teachers' job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Hu et al., 2023). Similarly, research in Hong Kong kindergartens revealed that principals who displayed high levels of empathy and supportive behaviour contributed to the improvement of young children's social skills, self-regulation, and related developmental outcomes (Hart, 2019).

The prominence of caring leadership in preschool education is closely linked to the unique characteristics of early childhood learning and teaching. Unlike higher levels of education or corporate organizations, preschool education requires extensive emotional labour, sustained nurturing, and intensive interpersonal interaction. During this developmental stage, children depend heavily on teachers' emotional support and role modelling, making it essential for principals to establish a caring environment for teachers so that such support can be effectively extended to children. Conventional leadership models, such as transactional or instructional leadership, primarily emphasize performance targets, curriculum implementation, and administrative efficiency, but they often neglect the relational and emotional dimensions that are indispensable in preschool contexts. In contrast, caring leadership directly responds to

the psychological, emotional, and professional needs of teachers while simultaneously cultivating a culture of trust, empathy, and respect that aligns with the developmental objectives of early childhood education. Moreover, in kindergartens where teachers frequently face challenges such as managing children's behaviours and meeting parental expectations, caring leadership proves instrumental in alleviating burnout, strengthening organizational commitment, and ensuring a stable and high-quality teaching environment. Consequently, caring leadership is not merely relevant but also comparatively more effective than other leadership styles in fostering sustainable excellence within preschool education.

Within the contemporary educational landscape, which underscores equity, diversity, and personalized management, the value of caring leadership has become increasingly prominent. In contrast to traditional administrative-oriented leadership, caring leadership highlights people-centred values and emphasizes the "emotional labour" inherent in educational work. By cultivating organizational relationships grounded in trust and respect, caring leadership enhances teachers' intrinsic motivation, reduces job burnout, and promotes the sustainable development and overall effectiveness of educational institutions (Ho et al., 2019). In recent years, European and North American countries have incorporated caring dimensions into their caring leadership policies. United Kingdom's Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) included leaders' ability to demonstrate care for staff as a key criterion in the 2021 preschool education assessment framework. Similarly, Finland and Norway have embedded courses on emotional management and interpersonal understanding into the professional training systems for kindergarten principals (Lambert et al., 2020).

1.1.2 Demand for Leadership Transformation in China's Process of Advancing Educational Modernization

With the in-depth implementation of the Outline of the National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) and the 14th Five-Year Plan for Education Development, China's preschool education has entered a new stage characterized by inclusive access and high-quality development. According to the Ministry of Education, by 2023 China had 287,000 kindergartens nationwide, with 48.94 million children enrolled, and the gross enrolment rate for three-year preschool education had reached 89.7% (Yao, 2023). However, rapid expansion has also exposed persistent structural problems, including regional disparities, insufficient teacher stability, and an administrative-oriented management model. These issues have gradually become key constraints on the high-quality development of preschool education (Hong et al., 2021).

Regional imbalance remains especially salient. Significant differences persist in kindergarten conditions, teacher allocation, and educational philosophy across eastern, central, and western regions, as well as between urban and rural areas. At the same time, high turnover and job burnout among preschool teachers have become widespread. A 2022 survey by the All-China Women's Federation found that approximately 62% of preschool teachers experienced substantial work-related fatigue, with the three main contributing factors being lack of support from leaders, high emotional pressure, and a weak sense of belonging (Nong et al., 2023). These findings suggest that current kindergarten governance cannot rely solely on administrative control, performance

pressure, or efficiency-oriented management, but must also address teachers' emotional security, professional dignity, and organizational attachment.

In this context, leadership transformation in preschool education should not be understood simply as a shift toward stronger motivation or better emotional management. Although transformational leadership emphasizes vision building, value internalization, and the mobilization of members toward organizational change, its core concern is still how leaders inspire followers to achieve collective goals and adapt to reform demands. Emotional leadership, by contrast, focuses primarily on leaders' capacity to perceive, regulate, and use emotions to influence interpersonal relationships and organizational climate. Caring leadership differs from both. Its central logic is not merely to drive change, nor merely to manage emotions effectively, but to place care, empathy, respect, listening, and concrete support at the center of leadership practice. In other words, transformational leadership is goal- and change-oriented, emotional leadership is emotion-recognition- and regulation-oriented, whereas caring leadership is relationship- and well-being-oriented, with particular emphasis on safeguarding teachers' sense of dignity, belonging, and professional sustainability.

This distinction is especially important in preschool settings. Kindergartens are not only organizations pursuing educational goals, but also highly relational communities in which teachers work under sustained emotional and interpersonal demands. In such contexts, leadership effectiveness depends not only on whether principals can articulate reform visions or regulate emotional climate, but also on whether they can build a caring organizational environment in which teachers feel respected, supported, and valued. Caring leadership therefore provides a more suitable analytical perspective for understanding how kindergarten principals respond to teacher stress, reduce turnover intentions, and strengthen organizational cohesion during the process of educational modernization.

To address these issues, the Guidelines for the Quality Assessment of Kindergarten Operation (2022) explicitly identify principals' leadership and management philosophy as key factors shaping kindergarten quality. In recent years, concepts such as caring leadership and emotional leadership have gradually entered preschool education research and principal training in China (Yao, 2023). For example, the Kindergarten Principal Leadership Growth Support Project launched by the Institute of Preschool Education at Beijing Normal University in 2021 found that principals with stronger caring qualities were better able to enhance teachers' organizational identity and sense of belonging, reduce teacher turnover, and improve kindergarten operations. Evaluation results showed an average increase of 21% in teacher satisfaction and a decrease of nearly 18% in teacher turnover among participating kindergartens (Nong et al., 2023). Local initiatives in Nanjing and Hangzhou have likewise begun to incorporate emotional competence and people-oriented leadership into kindergarten evaluation and development systems. Nevertheless, compared with emotional leadership and transformational leadership, caring leadership more directly addresses the practical needs of preschool teachers for relational support, professional recognition, and humane organizational conditions. It is increasingly viewed as a critical leadership approach for promoting high-quality, sustainable, and balanced development in China's preschool education sector.

1.1.3 Practical Demands in Weifang's Promotion of High-Quality and Balanced Development of Preschool Education

Weifang has achieved remarkable results in the development of preschool education. According to the Statistical Bulletin on the Development of Education in Weifang City (2023), there are 3,236 kindergartens in the city, with approximately 542,000 children enrolled, and the coverage rate of inclusive kindergartens has reached 89.1%. In recent years, the Weifang Municipal Government has continuously advanced the "Inclusive Preschool Education Enhancement Project". However, it still faces considerable challenges in urban-rural disparities, teacher mobility, and education quality supervision.

In 2022, the Weifang Municipal Education Bureau launched the Excellent Kindergarten Principal Capacity Enhancement Program, aiming to guide principals to transform from an "administrative" role to a "service-oriented" and "supportive" one by optimizing the content of principal training. Caring leadership has been listed as one of the core competencies of kindergarten principals.

While experiencing rapid expansion in scale, Weifang still encounters multiple challenges in improving the quality of preschool education. There is an imbalance in the allocation of educational resources between urban and rural areas, as well as among different regions. This has led to problems in some township kindergartens, such as a shortage of teachers, a monotonous curriculum, and outdated management concepts. The management levels of kindergartens vary greatly. Some private and rural kindergartens still adopt a highly administrative and transactional management approach, neglecting teachers' emotional needs and support for their professional growth. Due to high work pressure and unclear career development paths for teachers, the turnover and resignation rates of teachers remain high, directly affecting the stability of kindergarten operations and the continuity of children's development.

Currently, in areas such as Hanting District, Fangzi District, and Changle County, some pilot kindergartens have carried out practical explorations cantered around a "caring management culture". The public central kindergarten in Hanting District has established mechanisms such as a "Teacher Support Centre" and a "Teacher Soul Salon", implemented a regular heart-to-heart talk system between principals and teachers, and created an atmosphere of emotional trust. Some kindergartens in Changle County have enhanced young teachers' sense of belonging and professional identity through school-based projects such as "principal-accompanied leadership" and the "New Teacher Care and Growth Plan". Among the six pilot kindergartens in Hanting District, the frequency of emotional communication between principals and teaching staff has significantly increased. Teacher satisfaction has risen by an average of 19.4%, and the teacher resignation rate within one year has decreased by 12%.

However, the successful experiences of these kindergartens have not yet formed a systematic theoretical foundation and standardized assessment tools. There is also a lack of in-depth research on the mechanism of the "caring leadership’s profound impact on the development of kindergartens. Most studies on kindergarten leadership in the Weifang region focus on policy implementation or structural management, leaving a gap in research on the interactive relationships between principals' leadership styles, teachers' behaviours, and children's development.

Based on Weifang's current educational development strategy and practical dilemmas, conducting research on promoting performance through caring leadership in kindergartens is of great significance. Compared with other cities in Shandong Province, such as Qingdao and Jinan, where preschool education development has already entered a relatively mature stage with more balanced resource allocation and systematic teacher training mechanisms, Weifang still faces pronounced challenges in urban–rural disparities, teacher turnover, and management innovation. This makes it not only a representative case of a rapidly expanding but structurally imbalanced preschool education system, but also a critical testing ground for exploring how caring leadership can address these issues. Furthermore, while cities like Shenzhen and Hangzhou in eastern China have begun to incorporate emotional support and leadership care into principal training systems, Weifang is still in the early stages of practice, with pilot programs but lacking theoretical models and standardized assessment tools. This regional contrast highlights both the urgency and the necessity of conducting a systematic study on caring leadership in Weifang, as it can provide empirical evidence for less-developed regions while also enriching the national discourse on preschool education governance.

This research has distinct regional relevance and can also provide a referable practical model and theoretical basis for similar regions, facilitating the transformation of China's preschool education from "administrative governance" to modern governance characterized by "emotional support" and "organizational empowerment". In the current context of promoting high-quality development in preschool education, issues related to organizational management and performance enhancement in kindergartens have garnered increasing attention in recent years. In the pursuit of achieving performance, the relationship between leadership styles and employee states has been extensively explored. Caring leadership, a leadership approach cantered on empathy, emotional support, and moral responsibility, has unique advantages within educational institutions. By addressing teachers' psychological needs and interpersonal expectations, organizational commitment can be significantly bolstered, encompassing loyalty across affective, continuance, and normative dimensions.

Moreover, a leader's trustworthiness, a synthesis of competence, benevolence, and integrity, is regarded as the cornerstone for establishing employee trust and optimizing the organizational climate. Trustworthiness enhances collaboration quality and a sense of security within an organization. Team psychological capital reflects the positive psychological resources cultivated through team members' interactions and collaborations. It comprises team confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience, which are pivotal factors in enhancing team execution capabilities and stress resilience. Employee performance is manifested not only in the ability to accomplish tasks but also in collaborative efforts and continuous learning. Well-being denotes teachers' subjective satisfaction and positive experiences regarding their work and life states, influencing their work enthusiasm and organizational belongingness. The overarching goal of organizational performance, encapsulates the integration of leadership efficacy, human resource management, service quality, and organizational system city.

Therefore, this study constructed a systematic research framework with caring leadership as the core independent variable, organizational commitment, trustworthiness, and team psychological capital as mediating variables, and employee

performance, well-being as outcome variables. This framework aimed to delve into how leadership behaviours can ultimately realize organizational excellence by stimulating teachers' intrinsic psychological mechanisms.

1.2 Significance of the Study

1.2.1 Theoretical Significance

Theoretical research on caring leadership predominantly centres on the primary and secondary education stages, with transformational leadership, distributed leadership, and instructional leadership being the dominant paradigms. As a leadership model that emphasizes interpersonal understanding and emotional support, caring leadership remains an emerging research area in preschool education. By introducing the core concepts of caring leadership, this study not only broadens the scope of caring leadership theories but also responds to the growing practical demands for "human-cantered management" and "emotional support" in current preschool education. It contributes to enriching the diverse dimensions and development paths of leadership theories.

In the Chinese educational research system, leadership and management in preschool education have long been characterized by administrative and transactional approaches, lacking systematic research from an emotional perspective and on interpersonal interaction mechanisms. Based on the Chinese cultural context and combined with the realities of local educational management, this study explores the pathways through which caring leadership enhances teachers' organizational identification, strengthens the cohesion of the educational team, and improves the kindergarten culture. This research aids in constructing a theoretical model of preschool education leadership with Chinese characteristics and promotes the rooting and growth of the "human-cantered" educational management paradigm in the local context.

In recent years, there has been an "emotional turn" trend in educational sociology and organizational behaviour, with attention paid to how leaders reshape organizational culture and relationship networks through emotional labour, empathy, and interpersonal support. Focusing on the emotional dimension and embedding it into the leadership of preschool education organizations, this study contributes to the transformation of educational management research from a rational paradigm to an emotional paradigm, providing a theoretical basis for constructing educational organizations with a human touch, warmth, and inclusiveness.

1.2.2 Practical Significance

This study focuses on the caring leadership of kindergarten principals in Weifang City and its impact on the excellence-oriented development of schools, responding to the practical challenges in preschool education. It provides practical leadership strategies and improvement paths for educational practitioners. Most of the training received by kindergarten principals in China still centres on regulations, systems, and administrative affairs, lacking systematic guidance on "soft skills" such as emotional support, teacher care, and interpersonal understanding. By constructing the behavioural characteristics, implementation paths, and influence mechanisms of caring leadership, this study offers principals a leadership practice framework that transcends the traditional management model and is more in line with teachers' psychological needs.

It helps promote the transformation of principals from "managers" to "supportive leaders" and enhances management quality and the cultural atmosphere of kindergartens.

As parents' expectations for the quality of preschool education continue to rise, kindergartens face educational and teaching pressures and multiple challenges such as coordinating home-kindergarten relationships and shouldering social responsibilities. By emphasizing the "human-cantered" leadership concept and stimulating the enthusiasm and collaboration of teaching staff through caring leadership, this study helps create a positive, warm, and sustainable educational ecosystem. It optimizes the environment for children's growth and promotes the construction of the "soft power" of kindergartens. As a pioneer region in the modernization of educational governance in Shandong Province, Weifang City is highly representative in terms of the preschool education system and the capacity-building of kindergarten principals. Based on the practices in Weifang, this study systematically summarizes the operational paths, practical obstacles, and successful experiences of caring leadership in local kindergartens. It can provide replicable and promotable educational management strategies for other cities, especially small and medium-sized cities, and contribute to achieving high-quality and balanced development of preschool education nationwide.

1.3 Research Question

(1) What is the effect of caring leadership on organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, and employee well-being in kindergartens in Weifang, China?

(2) What are the mediating roles of organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, and employee performance in the relationship between caring leadership and employee well-being in kindergartens in Weifang, China?

(3) How can principals employ caring leadership to improve employee well-being in kindergartens in Weifang, China?

1.4 Objective of the Study

To achieve this aim, the study sought to focus on specific objectives:

(1) To explore the effect of caring leadership on organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, and employee well-being in kindergartens in Weifang, China.

(2) To examine the mediating roles of organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, and employee performance in the relationship between caring leadership and employee well-being in kindergartens in Weifang, China.

(3) To provide practical guidance for principals and kindergarten management on employing caring leadership to improve employee well-being in kindergartens in Weifang, China.

1.5 Scope of the Study

1) Scope of Area

This study focused on kindergartens in Weifang City, Shandong Province, China. As a representative city in eastern China with a well-established early childhood

education system, Weifang provides suitable research setting to examine how leadership behaviours, and caring leadership, influence organizational dynamics and school development in the preschool sector. The study focused on public and private kindergartens across different urban and suburban districts within Weifang. This includes institutions of varying sizes, funding structures, and administrative models, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the influence of caring leadership across diverse operational contexts.

2) Scope of Population

The population of this study consisted of kindergarten staff members in Weifang City, Shandong Province, China, including both public and private kindergartens. According to the Weifang Education Bureau's 2023 statistical bulletin, there were approximately 3,236 kindergartens in Weifang, with an estimated total workforce of over 45,445 early childhood education staff across both public and private sectors. The study focused on individuals who play a significant role in shaping the internal environment and performance of kindergartens, specifically targeting two groups:

Kindergarten Principals/Directors

These individuals represent the core leadership force in kindergartens and are directly responsible for implementing leadership strategies, managing teaching staff, and fostering school culture. Their leadership style, particularly caring leadership behaviour, is the central independent variable of this study.

Kindergarten Teachers and Support staff

Teachers and support staff are the primary recipients of leadership behaviour and the main agents of daily educational activities. Their organizational commitment, perceived trustworthiness of leaders, psychological capital, well-being, and performance are key dependent and mediating variables in this study.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Caring Leadership	Caring Leadership in this study refers to a leadership style exhibited by kindergarten principals that emphasizes empathy, emotional support, fairness, and the promotion of teachers' professional growth. It is operationalized through observable behaviors that can be reliably measured by teacher perceptions across five dimensions: being good to others, appreciating uniqueness, promoting self-actualization, maintaining shared interests, charismatic appeal.
Organizational Commitment	Organizational Commitment refers to the degree to which kindergarten teachers identify with, feel attached to, and are willing to remain with their kindergarten, reflecting their

Term	Definition
	emotional, calculative, and normative connection to the organization. It is operationalized through observable attitudes and perceptions of teachers, measured via a 23-item questionnaire across three dimensions: affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment.
Trustworthiness	Trustworthiness in this study refers to the degree to which kindergarten teachers perceive their principal as reliable, competent, and morally upright, reflecting the principal's ability to inspire confidence, demonstrate benevolence, and act with integrity. It is operationalized through observable teacher perceptions across three dimensions: ability, benevolence, integrity.
Team Psychological Capital	Team Psychological Capital refers to the collective positive psychological state of a kindergarten team, reflecting team members' shared confidence, hope, resilience, and optimism in achieving work goals and overcoming challenges. It is operationalized through teacher perceptions of their team across four dimensions: team confidence, team hope, team resilience, team optimism.
Employee Performance	Employee Performance refers to the degree to which kindergarten teachers effectively accomplish their professional responsibilities, encompassing not only the quality and efficiency of task completion but also their relational and learning behaviours within the team. It is operationalized through teacher self-reports across three dimensions: task performance, relational performance, learning performance.
Well-Being	Well-being refers to kindergarten teachers' subjective evaluation of their professional satisfaction, emotional state, and sense of accomplishment in their teaching environment. It reflects teachers' positive experiences at work, including feelings of achievement, recognition, attraction to the

Term	Definition
	profession, and emotional support received from students and leadership.

1.7 Contribution of the Study

This study offers several meaningful contributions to the academic field and professional practice in early childhood education, particularly within China's education modernization and leadership transformation efforts.

The study expands the body of knowledge on caring leadership by integrating the concept of caring leadership into the context of early childhood education in China. While traditional leadership theories have long focused on transformational or instructional leadership, this research introduces a new relational perspective that emphasizes empathy, trust, and psychological well-being. It contributes to the literature on well-being by exploring how psychological and organizational factors mediate the relationship between leadership and institutional success in kindergartens.

The findings provide evidence-based guidance for kindergarten principals, education managers, and policy implementers in improving school performance through emotionally supportive leadership. By identifying the impact pathways from caring leadership to outcomes such as employee well-being, organizational commitment, and team psychological capital, the study offers practical strategies to address pressing challenges in the early childhood sector. It helps to inform leadership training programs for principals, suggesting that emotional and interpersonal competencies are as essential as technical or administrative skills.

In line with China's national strategies for high-quality and equitable early childhood education, the study provides empirical support for including emotional leadership competencies in leadership assessment and kindergarten quality evaluation systems. The findings can help guide local education bureaus, especially in Weifang and similar regions, to design more humanized and effective professional development systems for kindergarten leaders.

This study is one of the few empirical investigations focusing on caring leadership in the Chinese preschool context, and more specifically within Weifang, Shandong Province, a city that is actively reforming its early childhood education system. The study fills a gap in regional education research and offers context-specific insights that can be used as a model for other second-tier cities in China.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is divided into 11sections as follows:

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Caring Leadership

2.3 Organizational commitment

2.4 Trustworthiness

2.5 Team Psychological Capital

2.6 Employee performance

2.7 Well-being

2.8 Correlation Research on the Relationship of Variables

2.9 Research on Preschool Education and Leadership Practices in Weifang

2.10 Conceptual Framework, Hypothesis and Explanation of Hypothesis

2.11 Conclusion

2.1 Introduction

Against the backdrop of the continuous pursuit of high-quality development in the current preschool education landscape, leadership, as a pivotal factor influencing organizational performance, teacher development, and the kindergarten culture of kindergartens, has garnered extensive attention from both researchers and practitioners. The traditional governance model of kindergartens, which was predominantly administrative, has gradually shifted towards a direction that places greater emphasis on emotional connections and human-cantered management. During this transformation, caring leadership, a leadership style that underscores emotional support, empathetic understanding, and interpersonal trust, has gradually emerged as a highly valuable research topic in preschool education.

Caring leadership focuses on the achievement of goals while placing a strong emphasis on caring for and respecting teachers in the process of goal attainment. It is well-suited for educational organizations where "people" are at the core. Teachers, as the executors and practitioners in kindergartens, have their work status, psychological capital, organizational commitment, and sense of trust influencing not only their performance and well-being but also the overall educational quality and excellence-oriented development of the kindergarten.

Therefore, this chapter aims to systematically review the theories of the core variables relevant to this study and their interrelationships. These core variables include six major concepts: caring leadership, organizational commitment, sense of trust, team psychological capital, employee performance, and employee well-being. By integrating

existing empirical research findings, the chapter sorts out the potential mechanisms of action among these variables and identified research gaps. On this basis, it constructs the conceptual framework and research hypotheses of this study, providing a solid theoretical foundation for empirical analysis.

2.2 Caring Leadership

2.2.1 Definition of Caring Leadership

Caring leadership is a leadership style that emphasizes emotional support, relational trust, and a human-oriented approach. In recent years, it has garnered widespread attention in organizational behavior and educational management. Although there is no complete consensus on its definition within the academic community, most researchers focus on how leaders' caring behaviors enhance teachers' psychological safety, emotional connection, and organizational identification. The origins of caring leadership can be traced back to theory of ethical care. According to Gilligan, a leader is a technical manager and a caring individual with a sense of emotional responsibility. Although theory originated from ethics, she emphasized "care" as a core virtue in organizational leadership, providing a philosophical basis for subsequent management-related research. However, this definition is more value-oriented and lacks behavioral indicators, thus offering limited operational support for educational practices (Zhang et al., 2022).

In caring leadership, Bondas (2003) was the first to conduct an analysis. Bondas proposed that caring leadership consists of development, mentoring, planning, organizing, reporting, guiding, staffing, coordinating, decision-making, and evaluating. He systematically analyzed five themes of caring leadership: caring motivation, dignity, measures, values, and relationships within a caring culture. Wiliams et al. (2011) argued that caring leadership encompasses kindness, compassion, and equality. It generates hope and belief through co-creation, innovates with insight, reflection, and wisdom, and purposefully creates a protected space based on mutual respect and care to establish an environment characterized by care, support, and trust. However, the above-mentioned research findings lack empirical evidence, and their scientific validity needs further verification.

Caring leadership is a relationship-based and responsive leadership style. It emphasizes listening to, understanding, and responding to others' emotions through everyday practices such as empathetic communication, providing timely feedback, and showing genuine concern for teachers' professional and personal well-being (Saab et al., 2019). In educational settings, this may involve leaders supporting teachers' career development and work–life balance, while in corporate contexts it may include managers recognizing teachers' family responsibilities or offering resources during times of stress. This perspective highlights the interactivity and continuity of caring behaviors, which helps elucidate how leaders establish trust within organizational relationships, not only by momentary acts of concern but also through consistency, reliability, and the fulfillment of promises over time (Ryu et al., 2020). Moreover, caring leadership has been shown to enhance teachers' psychological capital reinforcing their organizational commitment.

Nevertheless, the current research framework, largely guided by educational ethics, tends to understate the structural constraints and competing demands embedded in complex organizational systems. Leaders often face pressures related to performance evaluation, resource limitations, and institutional accountability, which may restrict the scope of caring practices. In addition, role conflicts frequently emerge when leaders must balance their caring

orientation with supervisory responsibilities, such as enforcing discipline or addressing underperformance, which may create tensions between empathy and authority. Finally, existing studies often idealize leaders' behavioral motivations, implicitly assuming that caring behaviors are purely altruistic. In reality, such actions may also serve instrumental purposes, for instance, fostering employee loyalty, reducing turnover, or enhancing organizational reputation. A more nuanced perspective would therefore recognize both the ethical and strategic dimensions of caring leadership.

From the perspective of school organizational culture, some scholars propose that caring leadership is a moral-oriented leadership built on shared beliefs, values, and emotional belonging. This theory emphasizes the linkage mechanism among beliefs, culture, and behaviors. It links emotional leadership with organizational cohesion (Watson et al., 2018). Nevertheless, this model is rather macro-level and fails to specifically define what behaviors embody "caring", which is not conducive to its application in quantitative research.

To address the issue of the lack of operability in caring leadership, scholars have put forward a behavior-oriented definition: Caring leadership refers to a leadership approach in which leaders enhance teachers' sense of belonging and satisfaction through specific behaviors such as emotional support, individual recognition, and active communication (Cassel et al., 2018). This definition holds significant empirical research value and is suitable for organizational surveys and leadership effectiveness evaluations. However, its focus is close to some dimensions of emotional labor and supportive leadership, resulting in unclear boundaries with adjacent leadership concepts, such as emotional leadership and transformational leadership.

Combining the context of preschool education, scholars suggest that caring leadership is a leadership behavior pattern manifested in daily organizational support, respectful listening, and fair incentives. The core of caring leadership lies in the kindergarten principal promoting the construction of kindergarten culture and teachers' organizational identification through caring practices. This definition integrates conceptuality and practicality, responding to the realistic characteristics of relationship-oriented management in kindergartens (Zhang et al., 2022).

In summary, although different scholars have provided multi-dimensional definitions of caring leadership from the perspectives of ethics, culture, and behaviors, it still faces three core challenges as a whole: (1) The conceptual boundaries are not yet clear, and there are overlaps with emotional leadership, supportive leadership, etc. (Ryu et al., 2020; Watson et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2022). (2) Many theoretical models emphasize an ideal image of leadership, giving inadequate consideration to the role tensions and resource constraints in real-world organizations (Cassel et al., 2018; Saab et al., 2019; Watson et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2022). (3) The empirical research foundation is weak, lacking unified measurement tools and cross-cultural comparative studies.

2.2.2 Dimensions of Caring Leadership

Despite the growing prominence of caring leadership in fields such as educational management, nursing management, and organizational behavior, there is currently a lack of a widely -recognized, cross-situational professional assessment tool. Existing research primarily relies on developmental achievements in related fields and employs some measurement tools for emotional leadership or caring behaviors to evaluate caring leadership. Representative tools include the following:

(1) Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ)

The Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) was developed by Ohio State University. The initial questionnaire comprised 150 items. It encompasses a structure dimension and a consideration dimension, with the latter being used for caring leadership. Stogdill (1963) simplified the questionnaire and clarified the structure of the consideration dimension, which includes six components: tolerance of ambiguity, allowing freedom, consideration, mediation of needs, integration, and accurate forecasting, totaling 45 items. The questionnaire was further condensed to 15 items, and 10 non-scored items were also provided for researchers to choose from. It adopts a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never, 5 = always), with some items reverse-scored. It can be used for self-assessment or other - assessments. A higher score indicates more pronounced characteristics of caring leadership. Currently, this questionnaire is widely used in multiple countries and regions, with Cronbach's α coefficients all exceeding 0.80, demonstrating good reliability and stability. The Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire provides a theoretical foundation in behavioral dimensions for subsequent assessments of caring leadership. However, as it was initially designed for general management contexts, its expressions in the emotional dimension and humanistic ethics are somewhat inadequate, making it difficult to comprehensively capture the deep-seated traits of caring leadership (Saab et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2022).

(2) Caring Factor Survey- Caring of Manager (CFS - CM)

The Caring Factor Survey - Caring of Manager (CFS - CM) was developed by Nelson et al. (2016) based on Watson's ten curative factors. This survey measures teachers' perceptions of managers' caring behaviors. The scale consists of 10 items and employs a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), with a total score ranging from 10 to 70. A higher score indicates that teachers perceive more caring behaviors from their managers. The scale for self-assessment and other assessments. Cronbach's α coefficients measured in the United States, Slovenia, and mainland China are 0.89, 0.97, and 0.96, demonstrating the scale's good reliability. This tool is concise and practical, focusing on perceived experiences and emphasizing the impact of managers' caring behaviors on teachers' psychological states. Despite its rigorous design, its theoretical foundation leans towards nursing ethics, with relatively little consideration given to the structural factors and power dynamics, limiting its cross-domain applicability (Zhang et al., 2022).

(3) Caring Assessment Tool - administration (CAT - admin)

The Caring Assessment Tool - administration (CAT - admin) was developed by American caring theorists such as Dufy, comprising 94 items. It is used to measure teachers' perceptions of managerial caring and can also be employed to assess the caring capabilities of nursing managers. Subsequently, the scale was simplified, encompassing three dimensions: respect for joint decision-making, non-caring (as a contrasting dimension), and 38 items with an open-ended question. The Cronbach's α coefficient of the simplified scale is 0.942. Aly et al. (2024) further simplified the original scale, which now includes only one dimension of caring behaviors, with 25 items and a Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.98 (Ho et al., 2019).

(4) Caring Leadership Scale

To meet the assessment needs in high-emotional-investment fields such as education, a research team developed the "Caring Leadership Scale" with a well-structured and clearly

- defined dimensional framework. This scale consists of 5 dimensions and 27 items, including benevolence (6 items), appreciation of uniqueness (4 items), promotion of self - actualization (4 items), safeguarding of common interests (3 items), and charismatic inspiration (10 items). It adopts a 5-point Likert scale, with a total score ranging from 27 to 135. Research indicates that the scale demonstrates high internal consistency in practical applications (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.994$) and can comprehensively reflect leaders' performance in emotional support, ethical behaviors, and individual attention. This scale integrates the personal charm of caring leadership with organizational management functions, encompassing both the emotional dimension and the organizational dimension as well as a cultural orientation. It has a balanced structure and a wide range of applicability, making it suitable for managers in the Chinese educational context (Zappalà & Toscano, 2020).

Currently, most of the tools employed to measure caring leadership draw on the understanding of "caring behaviors" from other fields, such as nursing and public administration. The Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) (Rodriguez, 2013) offers the earliest structural framework. The Caring Factor Survey-Caring of Manager (CFS-CM) (Vrbnjak et al., 2016) and the Caring Assessment Tool-Administration (CAT-admin) (Wolverton et al., 2018) focus on subjective perceptions and ethical dimensions. The Caring Leadership Scale endeavors to integrate behavioral operability and organizational cultural guidance, making it particularly suitable for multi-dimensional assessments in educational contexts. This study ultimately selected the "Caring Leadership Scale" as the measurement tool, due to its high reliability and well-structured nature because it possesses greater cultural congruence and practical interpretability within the Chinese context. Although attention still needs to be paid to its cross-domain applicability and item adaptability, this scale has already laid a solid foundation for explorations in preschool education.

2.2.3 Research on Caring Leadership

Early research on caring leadership was predominantly conducted in the fields of management and ethical care. Care ethics posits that the effectiveness of leaders lies in goal achievement and their responsiveness to the emotions and needs of the team members. Caring leadership is a relationship-based leadership style. Researchers have explored the influence of individual employee factors on their perception of caring leadership, including personal characteristics, cognition, and values (Wolverton et al., 2018). Some researchers have investigated the organizational factors affecting teachers' perceptions of caring leadership. Studies have indicated that teachers' educational background, years of work experience, emotional intelligence, and organizational fit are positively correlated with their perception of managerial caring. A lower educational level, contractual employment, and lower life satisfaction were significant factors influencing the perception of managerial care (Zappalà & Toscano, 2020).

The outcomes of caring leadership mainly encompass its impact on both individual teachers and organizations. On an individual level, a manager's caring leadership enhances employee satisfaction and reduces turnover intention and turnover rate. Research has demonstrated a positive correlation between a manager's caring behaviors and employee job satisfaction. A survey of 139 teachers by scholars revealed a high correlation between leadership caring behaviors and employee job satisfaction and a moderate correlation with teachers' intention to stay (Nong et al., 2023). However, a study using the Caring Assessment Tool on 731 teachers from multiple medical institutions in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States showed that teachers' perception of managerial caring did not

affect their job satisfaction (Hong et al., 2021); rather, the manager's competence and support for teachers influenced job satisfaction.

On an organizational level, a leader's caring leadership facilitates teachers' identity identification and sense of responsibility, thereby strengthening their organizational participation and extra-role behaviors to achieve the goal of high organizational performance. Research indicates that in diverse teams, leader care is closely related to team performance. Studies have also shown that caring leadership promotes employee participation in organizational meetings. Team-level caring leadership enhances teachers' job embeddedness across levels and plays a positive moderating role between perceived differences and job embeddedness (Saab et al., 2019). Teachers' perceptions of managerial caring strengthen their sense of responsibility and promote proactive behaviors. A questionnaire survey of 156 teachers from multiple medical institutions in Florida, United States, using the CFS, revealed a negative correlation between teachers' perception of managerial caring and their perception of workplace bullying (Watson et al., 2018).

The significance of care in organizational management is increasing, and managers' caring leadership is gradually receiving greater attention. However, most current research on the concept and structure of caring leadership is rooted in a Western cultural context and lacks empirical evidence regarding its structure (Abdullahi et al., 2020). There is also a dearth of professional assessment tools for measuring caring and leadership. However, when exploring the impact and underlying processes of caring leadership, only a few studies have examined the positive influence of leader caring on teachers based on social exchange theory, neglecting the complexity of individual cognition and failing to reveal the influence mechanism of caring leadership on employee behaviors. Therefore, this study aimed to construct a conceptual model of caring leadership within the Chinese cultural context, develop corresponding assessment tools, and uncover the impact of caring leadership on teachers' work behaviors and its underlying pathways.

2.3 Organizational Commitment

2.3.1 Definition of Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment was first proposed by the American sociologist Becker in 1960 based on teachers' "side - bet theory." The fundamental assumption of organizational commitment stems from the existence of rational economic individualism. In essence, there is a contractual relationship between teachers and the organization that is based on economic exchange. According to Blau's (1964) perspective of social exchange theory, when an organization conducts commitment-oriented training activities, in addition to incurring economic costs, it also invests emotion, reflecting the organization's trust and commitment towards its teachers. The organization anticipates reciprocal commitment from teachers in response to its investments. Mowday et al. (1979) defined organizational commitment as teachers' identification with the organization's goals and values, their willingness to exert effort for the organization, and their strong desire to remain with the organization. Mowday et al. (1979), taking a broader societal perspective, regarded organizational commitment as the willingness to expend energy and demonstrate loyalty to a social system. Morrow (1983) discovered that there are at least over twenty - five interpretations of organizational commitment, indicating that different people have different views on it.

Table 2.1 Definition of Organizational Commitment

Researcher	Year	Definition
O`Reilly &Chatmen	1986	The psychological contract between an employee and an organization is an implicit contract and expectation.
Meyer et al.	1991	Individuals have a considerable degree of identification and involvement with a particular organization.
Robbins	1996	An employee's identification with a particular organization, and maintain membership in the organization.
Robbins	2003	Employee loyalty to the organization, sense of identity, and the degree of participation in organizational activities.
Akkaya	2020	The individual's high degree of identification with the organization's goals and values, and a strong desire to work hard to achieve the organization's goals and to stay with the organization.
Imamoglu et al.	2019	The degree to which an employee recognizes accepts, and is committed to the current organization as a sense of belonging and as a psychological tie.
Li	2020	Individuals' identification with a particular organization and goals, and an attitude of wanting to maintain membership in the organization.

Source: Researcher, 2025

2.3.2 Dimensions of Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment has been conceptualized in various ways, with early studies offering two-dimensional frameworks that emphasized either attitudinal versus behavioral intention commitment (Hall & Schneider, 1972), or continuance versus value-based commitment (Stevens et al., 1978). While these typologies contributed to understanding the construct, subsequent research has increasingly converged on multidimensional models that better capture the cognitive, emotional, and normative bases of commitment. Among these, Meyer and Allen's (1991) Three-Component Model (TCM) has become the most widely applied and empirically validated framework. The model distinguishes affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment, representing teachers' emotional attachment, rational cost–benefit considerations, and moral obligation to remain with the organization, respectively.

Since the 1980s, organizational commitment studies have increasingly relied on construct-based measurements, with Meyer and Allen (1991) creating standardized scales to assess these three dimensions. A considerable body of research has demonstrated the validity and reliability of this scale across cultural contexts, including evidence of strong construct and correlational validity among Chinese teachers. These findings indicate that the three-dimensional model has widespread applicability beyond Western contexts. Therefore, this study adopted Meyer and Allen's (1991) organizational commitment scale, consisting of 23 items across affective, continuance, and normative commitment, as the theoretical and measurement basis for analyzing teachers' commitment. The Three-Component Model of Organizational Commitment (TCM), proposed by Meyer and Allen in 1991 and refined in

1990, is currently the most widely applied and well-structured theoretical framework. The three types of commitment are as follows.

Affective Commitment (AC): This refers to teachers' emotional attachment and psychological identification with the organization, stemming from the alignment between their personal values and the organization's goals. Teachers with high affective commitment voluntarily stay and invest in their work because they "like the organization" and "identify with its culture."

Continuance Commitment (CC): Teachers choose to stay based on rational calculations and trade - offs, such as "having invested a significant amount of time and energy in the organization and facing economic or career losses if they leave." This type of commitment exhibits a certain degree of passivity.

Normative Commitment (NC): NC is a commitment formed based on social norms, a sense of obligation, and responsibility. Teachers believe that "staying is the right thing to do," often influenced by factors such as family, culture, and the organizational atmosphere.

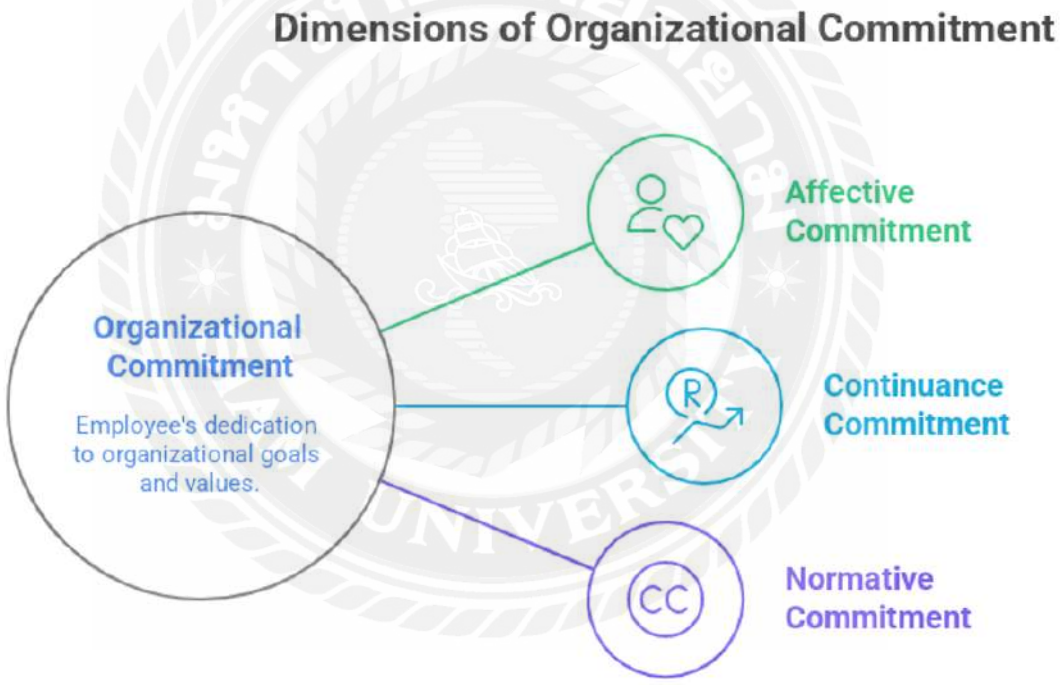


Figure 2.1 Three-Component Model of Organizational Commitment

Source: Meyer & Allen (1991)

Meyer and Allen's model boast strong explanatory power and a solid measurement foundation. Relevant research has been extensively validated across various cultural contexts globally, with Cronbach's α coefficients typically ranging from 0.70–0.90, indicating good reliability. However, some studies have pointed out that there is a certain degree of overlap among the three dimensions, particularly in non-Western cultures, where it is difficult to fully distinguish between "affect" and "norm" (Wiener & Vardi, 1980).

O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) proposed three pathways for the formation of organizational commitment: compliance, identification, and internalization. Compliance is

driven by the desire to obtain rewards, identification reflects a sense of belonging to the organizational culture, and internalization signifies that teachers' values align with those of the organization. Cook and Wall (1980) subdivided organizational commitment into three aspects: identification, involvement, and loyalty. Identification reflects alignment at the value level, involvement is manifested as diligent work, and loyalty represents an attitude of stable retention. Bogler and Somech (2004), in their research on teachers' organizational commitment, summarized it into three interrelated dimensions: identification, loyalty, and involvement. They also noted that teachers' identification with school culture has a crucial impact on their teaching satisfaction. Some scholars have proposed three categories of organizational commitment: spiritual, normative, and material, arguing that organizational commitment should be classified based on the deep-seated structure of psychological motivations. Among them, "material commitment" is highly similar to continuance commitment, while "spiritual commitment" is close to affective commitment.

Despite the widespread application of the three-dimensional model in empirical research, current studies face several challenges. First, there is ambiguity due to the overlapping scale dimensions. It is difficult to differentiate between affective and normative commitment in high-collectivist cultures. Second, the scale design neglects cultural differences. The model is built on the foundation of Western individualism and fails to fully consider Eastern cultural elements such as "relationship - orientation" and "moral responsibility." Third, longitudinal research on scale studies is lacking. Most studies rely on cross-sectional data, making it difficult to uncover the dynamic process of organizational commitment. Fourth, the localization of the measurement tools is insufficient. Many questionnaires are directly imported from the West, with inadequate translation and adaptation, affecting measurement validity. Therefore, based on Meyer and Allen's three-dimensional model, this study explored the mediating role of organizational commitment in the mechanism of caring leadership, considering the professional characteristics and cultural background of Chinese kindergarten teachers, and attempts to conduct semantic localization of the model.

2.3.3 Research on Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment, defined as teachers' sense of identification, attachment, and willingness to continue working towards an organization's goals, values, and relationships among its members, is systematically influenced by variables. These influencing variables can be categorized into three groups: organizational factors, job factors, and individual factors. In the education and service industries, leadership, as a critical organizational variable, is considered to have both direct and indirect effects on organizational commitment.

(1) Organizational Factors: The Supportive Forces of Structure and Culture

Organizational factors serve as the external conditions that form the basis for teachers' organizational commitment. They primarily include organizational support, organizational culture, organizational climate, resource allocation, fairness, and innovation. Perceived Organizational Support (POS) is one of the most representative antecedent variables. When teachers perceive that their value is recognized and supported by the organization, it stimulates their loyalty and commitment to reciprocate. Organizational support significantly influences the formation of affective commitment and inspires teachers' sense of responsibility through psychological contracts. Organizational culture and climate are also

regarded as important implicit factors shaping commitment. An open, inclusive, and individual-respecting organizational culture helps teachers establish a sense of identification. An organizational climate characterized by aligned goals and smooth communication facilitates the generation of emotional belonging.

(2) Leadership: The Core Mechanism Influencing Organizational Commitment

Among numerous organizational variables, leadership is widely recognized as one of the core variables influencing organizational commitment. In people-oriented and emotionally engaging industries such as education and services, leadership styles affect teachers' emotional connection, loyalty, and sense of belonging to the organization. There is a positive association between transformational leadership and organizational commitment. Visionary and inspiring leaders can stimulate teachers' emotional engagement by establishing a vision, providing individualized consideration, and offering intellectual stimulation. Caring leadership has been proven to have a significant effect in enhancing the organizational commitment of frontline teachers such as teachers and nurses. Caring leadership emphasizes leaders' empathetic, respectful, and development-focused behaviors during the management process. This "emotional investment" becomes an important source of inspiring teachers' affective commitment. Caring leadership can strengthen teachers' identification with organizational culture, thereby enhancing their retention intention and loyalty.

(3) Job Factors: The Interactive Effects of Job Attributes and Satisfaction

The characteristics of the job itself also significantly influence teachers' attitudes towards the organization. Research indicates that positive variables such as job challenge, clarity of job content, skill variety, job autonomy, and promotion opportunities are significantly correlated with organizational commitment. The Job Characteristics Model suggests that when a job provides teachers with a greater sense of control and accomplishment, it stimulates their sense of responsibility toward the job and loyalty to the organization. Role conflict and role ambiguity have been confirmed as negative factors affecting affective commitment. Variables such as organizational tenure, salary satisfaction, and perceived benefits influence continuance commitment.

(4) Individual Factors: The Internal Foundation of Individual Characteristics and Value Identification

Individual characteristics, such as gender, age, educational background, organizational tenure, personality traits, and family responsibilities, also influence the formation of organizational commitment to varying degrees. Research has found that older and more highly educated teachers tend to form stronger affective commitments, while the continuance commitment of younger teachers is easily influenced by career development opportunities. Whether an employee's values align with the organization's goals (value congruence) is one of the key variables predicting their affective commitment (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). When individuals achieve self-identification and value realization within the organization, they are more likely to develop internalized commitment.

Variables such as organizational support, job satisfaction, leadership style, and value identification play crucial roles in the formation of organizational commitment. Caring leadership, as a leadership approach that integrates emotional connection and value guidance, demonstrates unique advantages, particularly in industries with a strong sense of professional mission, such as education and healthcare.

2.4 Trustworthiness

2.4.1 Definition of Trustworthiness

In the field of organizational behavior and management research, trust and its extended construct, trustworthiness, have long served as crucial theoretical pivots for understanding interpersonal interactions within organizations. Trust is widely employed to elucidate the mechanisms of cooperation, communication, and commitment among organizational members. Trustworthiness, as a fundamental component of trust establishment, acts as a key prerequisite for fostering trust relationships within organizations. The academic community has encountered significant semantic ambiguities and operational challenges when defining the concepts of "trust" and "trustworthiness."

Trust, as a highly contextualized psychological phenomenon, is classified as a construct within the realm of everyday language (Calder, 1977), characterized by strong subjective interpretability and semantic ambiguity. The connotation of trust exhibits a high degree of differentiation and diversity due to variations in disciplinary backgrounds, research perspectives, and analytical levels. Consequently, despite the widespread application of "trust" in organizational theory, there has been a persistent lack of a unified and universally applicable definition and measurement framework.

Trustworthiness is defined as the perceived dependability of a particular entity (as perceived by others), representing a comprehensive evaluation of its behavioral reliability, moral standards, and competence levels, formed by others based on observations, experiences, or perceptions. This definition emphasizes the other-oriented perspective of trustworthiness, indicating that its essence is not an inherent attribute of the actor but rather a social-psychological judgment constructed based on others' subjective perceptions. The logical relationship between trustworthiness and trust lies in the fact that without a cognitive foundation of trustworthiness, trust is difficult to generate. Once trustworthiness is established, individuals make trusting choices in uncertain situations.

Therefore, trustworthiness is not a synonym for "trust" but rather a core starting point in the process of trust construction. Its existence is more akin to a multi-dimensional, subjective judgment of reliance on relational objects. Trustworthiness, starting from the perspective of "being worthy of trust" in the eyes of others, constitutes a necessary condition for the establishment of trust relationships, thereby influencing members' willingness to cooperate, communication frequency, and sense of belonging within organizations. In organizational leadership contexts, whether leaders are perceived as trustworthy by their subordinates determines whether their management behaviors can elicit trust and responsiveness, directly impacting core indicators such as team cohesion, performance, and satisfaction.

2.4.2 Dimensions of Trustworthiness

Although trustworthiness is generally regarded as a prerequisite construct for trust in most theoretical models of trust, there is no unified standard regarding its dimensional composition. Different scholars, starting from various theoretical perspectives, have conducted multi-dimensional definitions and measurement explorations of trustworthiness, resulting in several relatively representative structural models (Tomlinson et al., 2020).

The most classic and representative categorization comes from Mayer et al.'s (1995) seminal trust model. They define "trustworthiness" as a combination of three core dimensions:

ability, benevolence, and integrity. Ability refers to the knowledge, skills, and competence demonstrated by the trustee in specific tasks or domains. Benevolence denotes non-utilitarian concern and altruistic behavior exhibited within the relationship. Integrity is manifested in adherence to moral standards, commitment to promises, and consistency in values. This three-dimensional structure has been extensively empirically validated and is currently the most widely applied trustworthiness model.

Butler (1991) proposed a more refined 11-dimensional trustworthiness model, encompassing elements such as honesty, competence, consistency, loyalty, fairness, openness, commitment, availability, and judgment. This model emphasizes that trustworthiness is a highly complex and composite cognitive structure. While it offers a richer perspective, there is some overlap among its dimensions, and it also faces issues such as item redundancy and unstable validity in practical measurement.

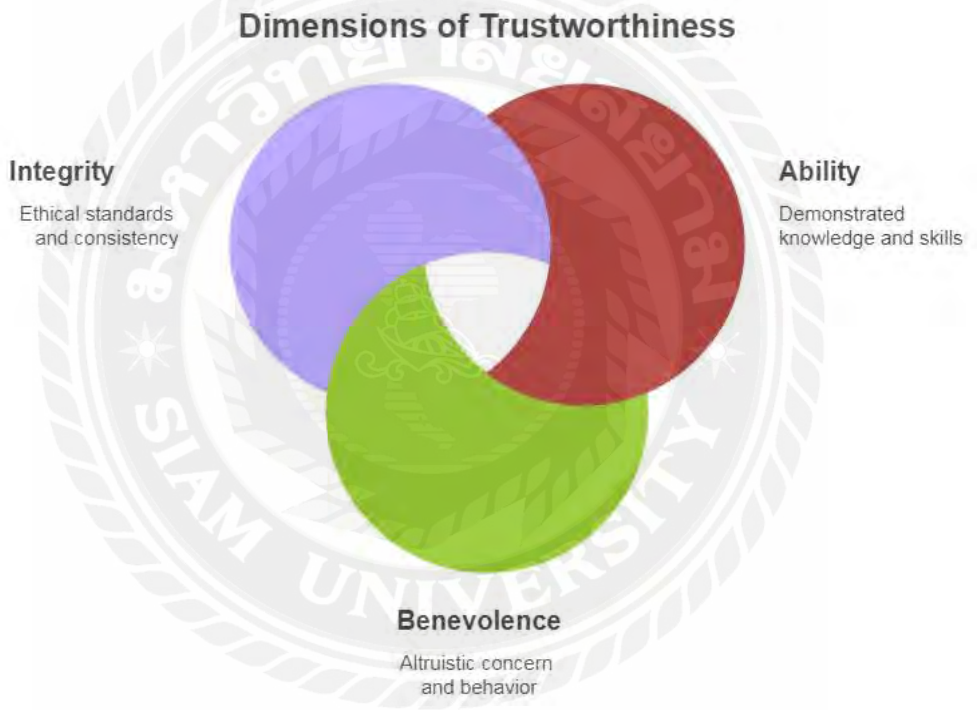


Figure 2.2 Dimensions of Trustworthiness

Source: Mayer et al., 1995

Gabarro (1978) proposed an initial trust development model, which highlights three phased dimensions in the process of trustworthiness development: role competence, motivation judgment, and relationship quality. This research focuses on the dynamic evolution of trustworthiness within organizational interactions. In the context of e-commerce, scholars have introduced a structure of trusting beliefs, comprising three dimensions - "ability, benevolence, and integrity" - which largely aligns with Mayer's model but places greater emphasis on the cognitive belief attributes of trust. In an educational setting, scholars have proposed a four-dimensional structure of trustworthiness: professional competence, moral character, emotional support, and fairness and impartiality (Toreini et al., 2020). This model underscores the emotional and ethical roles of teachers or leaders within organizations.

With the intensification of digital transformation, some emerging studies suggest that in remote work and virtual organizations, trustworthiness should encompass dimensions such as technological competence credibility, and data usage transparency. These dimensions reflect teachers' judgments regarding managers' information control and communication credibility in digital contexts (Tomlinson et al., 2020; Toreini et al., 2020).

Table 2.2 Dimensional Models for Measuring Trustworthiness

Researcher & Year	**Dimensional Model**	**Specific Content**
Gabarro (1978)	Three-dimensional Model	Role competence, motivation judgment, and relationship quality
Butler (1991)	Multi-dimensional Model	Honesty, competence, consistency, loyalty, fairness, openness, commitment, availability, judgment, etc.
Mayer et al. (1995)	Three-dimensional Model	Ability, benevolence, and integrity
Welsh (2012)	Four-dimensional Model (Proposed in relevant educational/organizational studies context)	Professional competence, moral character, emotional support, and fairness and impartiality
Tomlinson et al. (2020)	Novel Dimensions (Proposed in emerging digital work contexts)	Technological competence credibility and data usage transparency

Source: Researcher, 2025

In summary, the categorization of trustworthiness dimensions demonstrates an evolutionary trend from the classic three-dimensional model (Mayer et al., 1995) to multi-dimensional structural models and further to culturally adaptive and contextually reconstructed models. Different models possess their theoretical foundations and contextual applicability. The three-dimensional model proposed by Mayer et al. (1995) is the most widely adopted in management and educational research due to its clear structure and strong generalizability. However, with the diversification of organizational environments and the increasing complexity of technological backgrounds, measurement tools for trustworthiness dimensions still need to integrate cultural differences and contextual demands, to develop theoretical frameworks that are more universally applicable and locally adaptive.

2.4.3 Research on Trustworthiness

As organizational management shifts towards emotional management and relational governance, trustworthiness, as a critical cognitive variable in the trust generation mechanism, has seen its research expand from the initial static structural models to more dynamic, multi-level, and contextualized analytical approaches (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019; Tomlinson et al., 2020). Current academic research on trustworthiness primarily focuses on three aspects: the mechanisms through which trustworthiness influences organizational behaviour, the differential manifestations of trustworthiness across various contexts, and the

process of trustworthiness reconstruction and dynamic change.

Research on the mechanisms of trustworthiness centres on how it affects employee behaviour. Trustworthiness not only enhances employee performance and organizational commitment but also influences proactive behaviour through "psychological empowerment." (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019) In the realm of school management and caring leadership, teachers' perceptions of their principals' trustworthiness serve as an important mechanism explaining teacher satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviour, with its impact even surpassing that of formal authority.

The contextual variability of trustworthiness has also attracted widespread attention. Traditional models were mostly constructed within Western corporate organizations. In recent years, however, research has gradually ventured into high-risk industries, remote teams, and culturally sensitive organizations for adaptive analysis. Cross-cultural studies across multiple countries have indicated that in cultures with a high-power distance, individuals' judgments of trustworthiness rely more heavily on leaders' values and fair behaviour. Research on trustworthiness in educational contexts also reveals the reinforcing effect of cultural factors on the benevolence dimension. For instance, in East Asian countries, teachers form trust in leaders based on "relational ethics."

The dynamic evolutionary perspective of trustworthiness has emerged as a new research direction. While trustworthiness was once regarded as a stable structure, new research emphasizes that its formation and transformation are influenced by context, interaction quality, and historical events. During organizational change, perceptions of managers' trustworthiness can fluctuate significantly, and the trajectory of these changes holds predictive value for employee trust restoration. In educational organizations post-pandemic (Paauwe, 2022), leaders' decision transparency and emotional support behaviours during emergency management are viewed as key factors influencing trustworthiness fluctuations. Crisis trust research has also begun to explore whether trustworthiness can be rebuilt through "restorative behaviours" in the context of organizational crises and policy changes, becoming a new focus of attention.

Research also attempts to integrate trustworthiness with concepts such as "ethical leadership," "inclusive leadership," or "emotional leadership." Leaders' demonstration of morally consistent behaviour not only enhances perceptions of their trustworthiness but also strengthens teachers' psychological safety (Tigre et al., 2022). This is particularly crucial for fostering innovation and change within organizations. In the field of preschool education management, some scholars have started to incorporate trustworthiness into leadership assessment frameworks, considering it a core component of "emotional support-oriented leadership." (Chin et al., 2023; Tigre et al., 2022) Trustworthiness is also found to be stably associated with teachers' intention to stay and their psychological capital.

The study of trustworthiness is evolving from static structures to dynamic mechanisms, from general organizations to highly complex contexts, and from purely theoretical explorations to intervention designs. This process unveils the core value of trustworthiness in organizational system stability, leadership effectiveness, and employee behavioural motivation (Chin et al., 2023). Cross-cultural applicability, longitudinal evolutionary processes, and functional expansions in education, public welfare, and emerging digital organizations provide more targeted theoretical and empirical support for organizational trust-building and leadership development.

2.5 Team Psychological Capital

2.5.1 Definition of Team Psychological Capital

Psychological capital is a positive psychological resource, with its initial prototype proposed in the field of economics by Goldsmith et al. (1997). The American Psychological Association advocated incorporating psychological strengths into the category of "capital." The concept of "psychological capital" was systematically introduced by organizational behaviourists (Luthans et al., 2004). Based on positive psychology and organizational behaviour, Luthans et al. (2004) defined psychological capital as a positive psychological state that can be developed, measured, and managed. It comprises four core dimensions: self-efficacy (confidence), hope, optimism, and resilience. Hosen et al., (2003) regarded psychological capital as a relatively stable psychological trait acquired through education and experience, emphasizing its personality-related and enduring nature. Another mainstream perspective views psychological capital as a state-like characteristic, believing that it can be enhanced through interventions and manifests as positive psychological energy in organizational contexts. This viewpoint has been extensively validated by Luthans et al. (2004) and supported by empirical research. Avey et al. (2011) proposed that psychological capital possesses dual attributes, combining stability and malleability, highlighting its practical significance as an internal resource that can be cultivated in organizational management.

Based on the concept of self-efficacy, scholars such as Bandura introduced the notion of collective efficacy, which refers to a group's shared confidence in its collective capabilities. This laid a theoretical foundation for research on psychological capital at the team level and opened up avenues for exploring team psychological capital. Luthans et al. (2005) posited that team psychological capital is a psychological capacity that is measurable, developable, and capable of enhancing team innovation performance. Team psychological capital consists of three dimensions: team confidence, team resilience, and team optimism. Scholars define team psychological capital as a team-level psychological resource built on the aggregation of various positive psychological capabilities, sharing and intensifying the individual strengths of team members. Team psychological capital represents the positive psychological qualities that emerge among team members through daily interactions, communication, and collaboration, contributing to the team's positive growth and flourishing. It comprises team confidence, team resilience, team hope, and team optimism (Chen et al., 2019).

Scholars also define team psychological capital as being established based on mutual influence among team members and the accumulation of their psychological capital. In team activities, team members' emotional levels are mutually influenced, and their behavioural awareness is shaped and influenced by the actions taken by other team members. This mutual influence leads to a gradual convergence of cognitive awareness among team members, ultimately forming a process of positive psychological cohesion that enables the team to develop healthily, vigorously, and robustly (Kaçay & Güngör, 2020). Team psychological capital is a consistent positive psychological state that emerges from the interactions and mutual influences among team members, enhancing the team's developmental capabilities. Research has found that team psychological capital, due to its unity, continuity, close relationship with the organization's core values, and synergistic nature, is conducive to enhancing the organization's core competitiveness.

Table 2.3 Definitions of Team Psychological Capital

Researcher & Year	Main Viewpoint
Goldsmith et al. (1997)	Psychological capital is a positive psychological resource.
Hosen et al. (2003)	Psychological capital is a relatively stable psychological trait acquired through education, experience, etc., emphasizing its personality-related and enduring nature.
Luthans et al. (2004)	Psychological capital is a positive psychological state that can be developed, measured, and managed.
Luthans et al. (2005)	Team psychological capital is a psychological capacity that is measurable, developable, and capable of enhancing team innovation performance.
Chen et al. (2019)	Team psychological capital is defined as a team-level psychological resource built on the aggregation of various positive psychological capabilities, sharing and intensifying the individual strengths of team members.
Kaçay & Güngör, (2020)	Team psychological capital is a consistent positive psychological state that emerges from the interactions and mutual influences among team members, enhancing the team's developmental capabilities.
Westover, (2024)	Due to its unity, continuity, close relationship with the organization's core values, and synergistic nature, team psychological capital is conducive to enhancing the organization's core competitiveness.

Source: Researcher, 2025

Team psychological capital, as a positive psychological resource, has evolved from its initial conception as an individual-level personality trait to a critical variable in organizational management and team building. The four-dimensional structure of "hope, self-efficacy (confidence), optimism, and resilience" proposed by scholars such as Luthans has been widely accepted and demonstrated to be enhancible through targeted interventions. At the team level, team psychological capital embodies the synergistic effect of positive psychological forces among team members, showcasing the organizational cohesion and synergy derived from emotional resonance and cognitive convergence (Kaçay & Güngör, 2020). Based on existing research on team psychological capital and the context of this study, team psychological capital is defined as a consistent and synergistically integrated positive psychological state within the team. It is built on the shared psychological capital of individual team members, and this positive psychological state can foster team growth and development.

2.5.2 Measurement of Team Psychological Capital

As research on psychological capital continues to deepen, scholars have begun to extend it from the individual level to the team level, gradually constructing the theoretical

concept of team psychological capital. Team psychological capital is defined as a shared positive psychological state formed among team members through interaction, communication, and collaboration, primarily manifested in dimensions such as team confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience. The measurement of team psychological capital has evolved from a "four-dimensional" to a "multi-dimensional" approach, reflecting the diversity in the requirements for psychological capital content across different organizational contexts and team types. Existing research has expanded from technology innovation teams and R&D teams to general work teams and educational teams, with the reliability and validity of measurement tools gradually improving. However, current research still faces issues such as inconsistent structures, overlapping dimensions, and a lack of unified measurement standards. Future research should strengthen cross-contextual validation of structural dimensions, promote theoretical refinement of the construct, and advance the standardization of measurement tools to serve organizational development and leadership practices.

Table 2.4 Measurement Dimensions of Team Psychological Capital

Dimension	**Researcher &Year**	**Structure Dimension**	**Research Object**
Two-Dimensional Model	Ellison et al. (2007)	Explicit psychological capital, latent psychological capital	Technology and Innovation Teams
	Schaufeli & Bakker (2004)	Task-based psychological capital, interpersonal-emotional psychological capital	-
Three Dimensional Model	Geremias et al. (2022)	Team efficacy, team optimism, team resilience	All Teams
Four-Dimensional Model	Avey et al. (2011)	Team confidence, team optimism, team hope, team resilience	All Teams
	Chowdhury et al. (2002)	Team confidence, team co-operation, team vision, team trust	Technology Innovation Team
	Kappagoda (2018)	Endeavour, resilience, optimism, hope, confidence and courage	R&D Teams
Five-Dimensional Model	Kniffin (2021)	Shared team vision, team resilience, team efficacy, team belonging, team optimism	All Teams
Six-Dimensional Model	Chowdhury et al. (2023)	Team efficacy, team hope, team optimism, team resilience, team co-operation and team responsibility	Project Teams

Source: Researcher, 2025

Through literature analysis and synthesis, it has been found that scholars predominantly approach the study of team psychological capital's structure from two perspectives: (1) Categorizing the structure of team psychological capital based on the research subjects into two distinct types: one applicable to all populations and the other tailored to specific groups. (2) In terms of research dimensions, some scholars directly adopt the classic four-dimensional structure of psychological capital developed by Luthans et al. (2007). They either select a subset of these dimensions from Luthans et al.'s (2007) original framework for their studies or, in a pioneering move, develop new structures and dimensional characteristics of team psychological capital. Currently, the four-dimensional structure of team psychological capital, comprising team confidence, team hope, team optimism, and team resilience, has gained widespread recognition among academics. Team confidence emphasizes team members' affirmation, recognition, and unwavering belief in the team. The team's hope underscores team members' shared aspirations and positive visions for the team's common goals (Chowdhury et al., 2002). Team optimism refers to team members' convergent and positive expectations regarding the team's future. Team resilience denotes the team's ability to swiftly regain its strength, overcome obstacles, and resolve difficulties in the face of adversity. Building upon this, the present study also adopts this perspective, dividing team psychological capital into the four dimensions of team confidence, team hope, team optimism, and team resilience (Kniffin, 2021).

2.5.3 Research on Team Psychological Capital

Scholars have explored the antecedents of team psychological capital from two main factors: individual variables and organizational variables. As a positive psychological resource at the team level, the formation of team psychological capital is not accidental but is influenced by a combination of individual characteristics, team attributes, and organizational contexts. Existing research suggests that the antecedents of team psychological capital can be broadly categorized into three groups: demographic variables, individual variables, and organizational variables. Individual variables primarily encompass demographic factors and individual diversity, while organizational variables include team cohesion, team support, and organizational culture (Kniffin, 2021).

Factors such as gender, age, and educational level of team members can influence their psychological manifestations within the team, thereby shaping the overall psychological atmosphere of the team. For instance, research has found that members with higher educational levels are more likely to develop a positive sense of belonging and trust in the team, whereas a diverse gender structure may enhance team interaction through different communication styles, fostering the accumulation of hope and resilience (Chowdhury et al., 2023).

In terms of individual variables, stable psychological traits of team members (such as self-efficacy, emotional stability, and conscientiousness) serve as the psychological foundation for constructing team psychological capital. Individuals with positive personality traits are more likely to maintain a positive mindset in the face of stress, thereby stimulating the team's overall resilience and optimism. Individual diversity (e.g., differences in skill backgrounds and thinking styles) can enhance innovation and problem-solving capabilities, providing diverse cognitive resources for the formation of team psychological capital. Team cohesion, as a reflection of the quality of internal relationships within the team, has been widely confirmed as an important antecedent of psychological capital. In highly cohesive teams, members are more willing to support each other and progress together, thereby

enhancing the team's overall hope, confidence, and optimism (Chowdhury et al., 2023; Geremias et al., 2022).

Job satisfaction is one of the most common and extensively studied outcome variables of team psychological capital. Research indicates that high levels of psychological capital within a team can create a supportive and secure atmosphere, thereby enhancing individuals' identification with and satisfaction with their work. Employee engagement and sense of belonging are also frequently used as outcome indicators. When team members perceive an atmosphere of team confidence, hope, and resilience, they are more likely to develop a sense of commitment and organizational identification, resulting in stronger emotional engagement and retention intentions. A positive psychological atmosphere can also stimulate members' creativity, enabling them to be more solution-oriented and innovative when facing problems, thereby promoting the team's overall intellectual vitality and breakthrough capabilities (Chowdhury et al., 2002).

From the perspective of organizational variables, the organizational environment in which the team operates has a significant impact on the formation of psychological capital. Team support, including emotional support, resource support, and feedback mechanisms from leaders, can enhance team members' trust and commitment to the organization, fostering higher levels of collective confidence and hope. The positive orientation within organizational culture (such as encouraging innovation, respecting differences, and recognizing cooperation) provides institutional safeguards for the healthy growth of psychological capital. A learning atmosphere that encourages reflection, trial and error, and knowledge sharing is also regarded as an important antecedent variable. A learning atmosphere that fosters these elements helps team members accumulate positive experiences, enhances their ability to cope with challenges, and thereby strengthens the team's resilience and positive expectations (Chowdhury et al., 2002; Geremias et al., 2022).

The formation of team psychological capital is a systematic process involving multi-factor and multi-level interactions. Team psychological capital significantly influences team performance, especially in challenging and stressful situations. Teams with high psychological capital typically possess stronger beliefs in achieving goals, greater resilience in the face of difficulties, and positive expectations for the future, thereby enhancing team execution and collaborative efficiency. Meanwhile, corporate spirit, as a manifestation of organizational culture, is strengthened through the nourishment of psychological capital, including the formation of team responsibility, a spirit of struggle, and shared values (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Group work participation, innovation performance, and change-supportive behaviors are considered important extended effects of team psychological capital. For example, team members in a high psychological capital atmosphere are more willing to take on new tasks proactively, support organizational change, participate in decision-making processes, and drive continuous improvement and innovation within the organization.

Based on the findings of existing research, team psychological capital can exert positive influences on both individuals and organizations. As a positive psychological state within the team, team psychological capital has a positive impact on the team's organizational effectiveness. As an important area of cross-disciplinary research between organizational behavior and positive psychology, team psychological capital has been proven to be a cultivable resourceful force and demonstrates widespread positive impacts on team members' behaviors, emotional states, and organizational performance (Ellison et al., 2007). As a key

variable promoting the healthy operation of organizations, team psychological capital has been confirmed to yield positive outcomes at multiple levels, significantly enhancing individual emotions, behavioral states, and overall team effectiveness.

2.6 Employee Performance

2.6.1 Definition of Employee Performance

Employee performance, a crucial research topic in the fields of organizational behaviour and human resource management, has garnered scholarly attention since the 1970s. As research perspectives have evolved, its definition has gradually expanded from a singular focus on outcomes to encompass a multidimensional structure that includes behaviour, outcomes, and even motivation. Currently, the prevailing academic viewpoints can be categorized into three main types: result-oriented, behaviour-oriented, and integration-oriented.

The result-oriented definition of performance emphasizes the work achievements realized by teachers within a specific time frame. This perspective views employee performance as a quantifiable outcome resulting from behaviors closely tied to the attainment of job objectives. Performance is seen as a result-driven metric, with an emphasis on "what has been accomplished." Such definitions highlight the outcome-oriented and goal-driven nature of performance, offering operational convenience for practical evaluations. However, they also carry the risk of oversimplifying individual behaviors into mere "outputs," potentially overlooking factors such as teamwork and external conditions beyond an individual's control.

The behaviour-oriented perspective on performance shifts the focus to teachers' behavioral manifestations rather than the ultimate outcomes. Bernardin and Beatty (1984) argue that performance should be understood as observable behaviours rather than solely the results of those behaviours. Performance must be an individually controllable behavioural process because outcomes are influenced by external systemic factors. Borman and Motowidlo (1997) distinguished between task and contextual performance. Task performance centres on behaviours directly related to job responsibilities, whereas contextual performance focuses on teachers' contributions to fostering a conducive organizational environment. This viewpoint underscores the value of teachers' proactive and collaborative behaviors but poses challenges in terms of standardizing and quantifying performance criteria in practice.

The third viewpoint is the integration-oriented approach, which places equal importance on both the behavioural process and the outcome results. It posits that performance should be determined by both "what is done" and "how it is done." Thus, employee performance is viewed as a composite of both behavior and outcomes, necessitating the evaluation of not only the effectiveness of work completion but also the effort, responsibility, and work methods demonstrated during the process. Performance assessment is seen as both the "endpoint" of results and the "path" and "efficiency" of the behavioral process. This viewpoint has garnered consensus among researchers, offering the advantage of comprehensively reflecting teachers' value contributions to the organization while considering both fairness and incentives.

In summary, the definition of employee performance has evolved from a focus on outcomes to behaviours, and eventually to an integrated approach. Despite the varying

emphases of different research perspectives, there is a consensus that performance should be closely linked to organizational goals and possess evaluability. With the transformation of organizational management philosophies, the integrated-oriented definition of performance is gradually becoming mainstream.

2.6.2 Dimensions of Employee Performance

With the development of performance management theory, scholars have gradually recognized that employee performance encompasses multiple behaviour- and outcome-oriented dimensions. Campbell et al. (1993) were the first to systematically propose seven fundamental dimensions of employee performance, including task performance, written and oral communication, demonstrated effort, and teamwork, laying the groundwork for subsequent research.

Task performance refers to the skills and efficiency demonstrated by teachers in fulfilling their formal job responsibilities, focusing on "what has been done." Borman and Motowidlo (1997) pointed out that task performance is the degree to which measurable work tasks, closely related to job descriptions, are accomplished, serving as one of the core components of performance evaluation. Contextual performance, also known as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), pertains to the positive contributions teachers make to the overall functioning of an organization beyond their formal duties, such as voluntarily assisting colleagues, actively participating in organizational affairs, and safeguarding company interests. Organ (1988) argued that contextual performance is strategically significant for the long-term development of organizations. Adaptive performance refers to teachers' ability to cope with changes, solve new problems, and respond to emergencies. In a rapidly changing work environment, employee flexibility and adaptability have become crucial dimensions for evaluating performance. Innovative performance refers to teachers' creative problem-solving abilities demonstrated in their roles, as well as their proactive behaviors in process optimization, product, or service innovation. Innovative performance reflects teachers' long-term impact on enhancing organizational value. The learning and development dimension focuses on teachers' continuous learning capabilities during their tenure, including knowledge updates, skill expansion, and career development potential. This dimension emphasizes teachers' consistent commitment to personal growth and organizational development.

Scholars have also proposed more refined dimensions based on various research objectives. Through the integration of extensive literature, scholars have proposed a structural model of employee performance encompassing dimensions such as work quality, work quantity, interpersonal adaptability, motivation, and initiative.

The academic community has proposed more comprehensive performance evaluation structures. Among them, the three-dimensional model of task performance, relational performance, and learning performance has gradually gained widespread attention and application in the field. This model, consisting of 12 items, exhibits high reliability and construct validity and is widely used across various organizational contexts, including education, healthcare, and enterprises. Task performance refers to teachers' ability and efficiency in completing established tasks and achieving work objectives within the scope of their job responsibilities. Relational performance pertains to teachers' interactions with colleagues, superiors, and subordinates, emphasizing teamwork, communication skills, and interpersonal relationship management. Learning performance represents the dimension of

teachers' development potential, highlighting their self-improvement awareness and capabilities, including the proactive acquisition of new knowledge, skill enhancement, and adaptability to organizational changes. This study employed an employee performance scale comprising 12 items across three dimensions—task performance, relational performance, and learning performance—as the measurement tool.

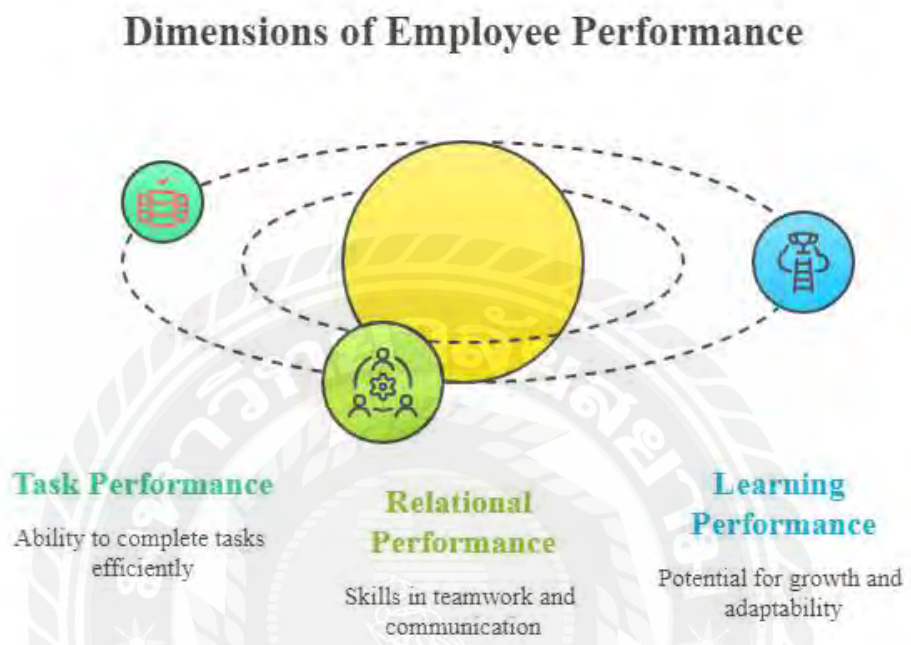


Figure 2.3 Dimensions of Employee Performance

Source: Borman & Motowidlo (1997)

Employee performance is a multifaceted and dynamically intertwined construct encompassing not only direct support for organizational task objectives (such as task performance) but also the adaptability and additional contributions of individual behaviors within the organization (such as contextual and adaptive performance). In the design of performance evaluation systems, it is imperative to scientifically integrate these dimensions based on the organization's nature, industry characteristics, and job-specific features to achieve more comprehensive management objectives.

2.6.3 Research on Employee Performance

Research on employee performance has accumulated a wealth of theoretical and empirical findings in the field of organizational behavior. Numerous studies have demonstrated that employee performance is multifaceted and hierarchical. Scholars argue that employee performance encompasses multiple aspects, including the quality of task completion, work attitudes, and behavioral manifestations (Deluga, 2021). This multidimensional perspective facilitates a comprehensive understanding of teachers' contributions to the organization. The definition of performance has evolved from a singular result-oriented approach to an integrated one that combines both behavior and outcomes. Employee performance emphasizes dual consideration of both the process and the results (Qalati et al., 2022).

The impact of leadership behavior on employee performance is a focal point of research. Empirical studies have shown that positive leadership styles, such as caring and transformational leadership, can significantly stimulate teachers' work enthusiasm and performance (He et al., 2020). These leadership styles enhance teachers' psychological capital and organizational commitment, thereby improving their job satisfaction and initiative, and ultimately promoting performance enhancement. Research indicates that the influence of leadership style is context-dependent. Factors such as industry characteristics, organizational culture, and individual employee differences can modulate the relationship between leadership behavior and performance. This suggests that in practical applications, enterprises and managers must flexibly adjust leadership strategies based on specific environmental and personnel characteristics.

Research has found that psychological capital, comprising the four dimensions of self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience, has a significant positive impact on employee performance. Psychological capital enhances individuals' ability to face challenges and fosters innovation consciousness, thereby driving an overall improvement in performance. However, there are limitations in confirming causal relationships, as most studies are based on cross-sectional data, making it difficult to reveal the dynamic interaction process between psychological capital and performance (Dey et al., 2022). Team factors also play a crucial role in influencing employee performance. Team cohesion, support, and psychological capital have been proven to enhance team members' sense of belonging, trust, and collaborative effectiveness. In innovative and knowledge-intensive organizations, a positive team atmosphere is an important safeguard for performance improvement. Currently, relevant research predominantly focuses on specific industries or organizations and lacks extensive cross-industry and cross-cultural validation (Supriyanto et al., 2020).

Existing research on employee performance has constructed a relatively systematic theoretical framework encompassing multifaceted factors such as individual traits, leadership behavior, psychological resources, team atmosphere, and organizational support. It has advanced both theory and practice by integrating multidimensional performance metrics. Nevertheless, performance research still faces numerous challenges, including further verification of causal relationships, expansion of cross-cultural applicability, and innovation in performance standards in novel work environments (Budiansyah, 2021). Future research should emphasize interdisciplinary integration and a dynamic perspective to deepen the understanding of the complex mechanisms underlying employee performance, thereby providing enterprises and managers with more scientific and effective pathways for enhancing performance.

2.7 Well-Being

2.7.1 Definition of Well-Being

Happiness is regarded as an overall and enduring state of life, manifested as an individual's holistic perception after achieving satisfaction in various aspects, such as health, interpersonal relationships, economy, and career. It serves as a more macroscopic assessment of "quality of life." Well-being is characterized by subjectivity and immediacy. It represents an individual's subjective experience and psychological feelings about their state of life within a certain period. Well-being is a psychological manifestation that is intertwined with emotional states and cognitive evaluations. Therefore, well-being can be viewed as the psychological manifestation of happiness, constituting an important dimension and entry

point for measuring it.

In the late 1960s, research on well-being gradually entered an empirical stage. Warr (1990) proposed that well-being should be studied from a subjective perspective, marking a shift in happiness research from a philosophical paradigm to an empirical psychological approach. Subjective Well-Being (SWB) posits that well-being encompasses three aspects: positive emotions, negative emotions, and life satisfaction. This model has become a classic theoretical foundation for well-being research and has been widely cited and expanded in subsequent studies. Despite its emphasis on individual subjective experiences, this theory relies heavily on standardized measurement tools in practical operations. A common limitation of well-being research is its relatively weak sensitivity to cultural differences and contextual backgrounds.

Seligman (2002), a prominent figure in positive psychology, expanded the dimensions of happiness by proposing the "PERMA model," which consists of five components: positive emotion, engagement, meaning, relationships, and achievement. This model highlights the multiplicity and functionality of happiness, emphasizing the pathways for constructing individuals' positive psychological strengths. This signifies a shift in happiness research from a descriptive to an interventionist and generative approach. However, this model has faced controversies, such as the independence among its five dimensions and the need for further empirical verification of its universality across different social cultures.

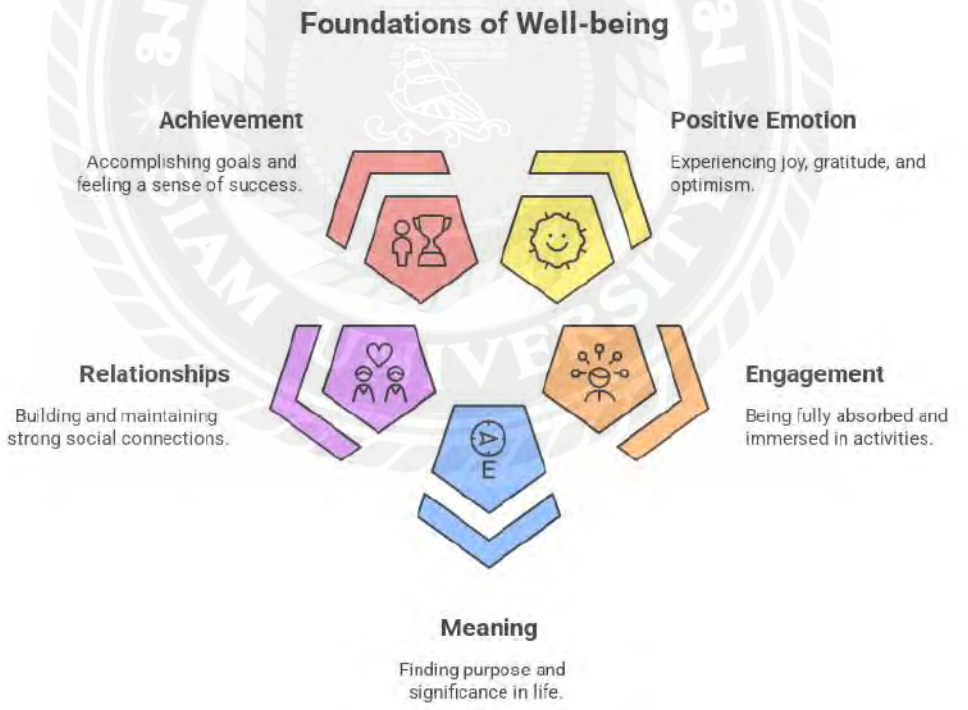


Figure 2.4 Foundations of Well-being

Source: Seligman, 2002

In the professional domain, research on well-being focuses on "occupational well-being" and "occupational subjective well-being," emphasizing a comprehensive cognition that integrates individuals' emotional experiences and rational evaluations of their

occupational status. Among teachers, well-being is influenced by personal factors and significantly constrained by external variables, such as the educational system, school culture, and interpersonal support systems. Hardy & Scott (1983) first introduced the concept of "teacher well-being," which refers to a positive and relaxed emotional state exhibited by teachers amidst stress and anxiety. Teacher well-being is further delineated into three aspects: life satisfaction, positive emotion, and negative emotion. Although these definitions facilitate specific measurements in operational terms, they primarily concentrate on the emotional and cognitive dimensions, lacking sufficient exploration of the structural and dynamic aspects of teachers' occupational well-being.

Research on the definitions of happiness and well-being has gradually shifted from philosophical speculation to psychometric approaches, evolving from static descriptions to dynamic ones. Different scholars have varying interpretations of the connotation of well-being, with some emphasizing its state-like nature and others highlighting its stability and cultivability. Despite the substantial support received by the Subjective Well-Being (SWB) model and PERMA theory in empirical studies, current research still faces challenges such as cultural adaptability, limitations in cross-sectional comparisons, and insufficient investigation into longitudinal changes. Future research should prioritize the development of constructs and measurement adaptation of well-being within cultural contexts and expand the diversity of research subjects. Additionally, leveraging technological tools to delve deeper into the mechanisms through which well-being operated in occupational, personal, and social interactions facilitated the advancement of happiness theories toward a more systematic and practical orientation.

Regarding the dimensions of well-being, the academic community generally regards it as a multidimensional, complex, and dynamic psychological construct. Joan et al. (2004) proposed specific measurement dimensions for teachers' occupational well-being, including achievement display, work recognition, work attractiveness, and emotional support. These dimensions are closely aligned with the practical aspects of teachers' work, emphasizing the significant impact of occupational achievement and emotional support on well-being. From a team and organizational perspective, scholars underscore the social interactions and supportive functions of well-being. For instance, research on workplace well-being indicates that emotional support stems from organizational management and encompasses mutual understanding and collaboration among colleagues. Such social support is a crucial factor in sustaining and enhancing employee well-being. Extending the dimensions of well-being to work attractiveness reflects teachers' interest and enthusiasm for their work, serving as an important intrinsic motivator for sustained engagement and positive performance in the workplace.

In their study on the dimensions of well-being, Joan et al. (2004) developed a tailored well-being scale specifically for teachers' occupational well-being, focusing on four core dimensions: achievement display, work recognition, work attractiveness, and emotional support. The design of this scale considers the unique characteristics of the teaching profession, addressing both teachers' perceptions of their professional capabilities and achievements, as well as the recognition and emotional support they receive in their work environment. Meanwhile, the dimension of work attractiveness emphasizes teachers' interest and investment in their profession, which is significant for enhancing occupational well-being (Rambod et al., 2023). This scale embodies the concrete manifestations of well-being within occupational contexts, reflecting that well-being is not merely an intrinsic psychological

experience but also the outcome of interactions with the occupational environment. Compared to the traditional dimensions of subjective well-being, the scale proposed by Joan et al. (2004) places greater emphasis on occupational attributes and situational factors, providing a more precise and practical measurement tool for research on teachers' well-being. This contributes to advancing the theoretical understanding and practical improvement of teachers' occupational well-being.

2.7.2 Research on Well-Being

Research on well-being has garnered significant attention in recent years in the fields of organizational behavior and psychology, primarily at the individual, team, and organizational levels. At the individual level, studies have predominantly focused on how individual psychological traits and emotional states influence well-being. Research indicates that psychological capital factors, such as an individual's level of optimism, self-efficacy, and emotional regulation, have a notable positive impact on well-being (Cook & Wall, 1980; Seligman, 2002). Additionally, personal life satisfaction, psychological resilience, and the extent of self-actualization are crucial determinants of well-being. These intrinsic psychological resources aid individuals in coping better with work pressures and challenges, thereby enhancing their overall well-being.

At the team level, studies emphasize the primitive effects of social support, communication quality, and team cohesion among team members on their well-being. Strong emotional support and trusting relationships within a team can significantly enhance individuals' job satisfaction and psychological health (Rambod et al., 2023). A collaborative team atmosphere and shared positive psychological capital are also regarded as key factors in boosting employee well-being. A favorable team environment not only alleviates work stress but also stimulates positive emotions among members, contributing to an overall elevation in the team's well-being.

At the organizational level, leadership style, organizational culture, and the work environment play pivotal roles in employee well-being. Research has found that supportive and caring leadership can enhance teachers' occupational well-being and psychological safety (Luthans et al., 2007). A positive organizational culture encourages teachers to develop their self-worth, fosters an open and inclusive atmosphere, and helps strengthen their sense of belonging and well-being. Reasonable job design, incentive mechanisms, and career development opportunities are also vital organizational factors in safeguarding employee well-being.

Well-being, a multidimensional and hierarchical psychological state, results from the interaction between an individual's intrinsic resources and the external environment (Li, 2019). Current research continually underscores the importance of adopting a comprehensive perspective that spans from the individual to the team and the organizational system as a whole to understand and promote the formation and development of well-being. This provides rich theoretical support and intervention pathways for organizational management (Rambod et al., 2023). Future research should further explore the manifestations of well-being across different cultural contexts and their cross-level interaction mechanisms to achieve more precise strategies for enhancing well-being.

2.8 Correlation Research on the Relationship of Variables

2.8.1 Impact of Caring Leadership on Organizational Commitment, Trustworthiness, Team Psychological Capital and Well-Bing

(1) Impact of Caring Leadership on Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is defined as an employee's identification with, emotional attachment to, and willingness to remain with an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Caring leadership, a leadership style centered on respecting and caring for teachers' well-being, emphasizes the empathy, supportiveness, and sense of responsibility that leaders demonstrate in interpersonal interactions (Porter, 2015). Within this relationship, research indicates that caring leadership promotes stronger affective commitment among teachers by satisfying their fundamental psychological needs, such as a sense of belonging, security, and respect. Caring leaders achieve this through active listening, providing psychological support, and assisting teachers in achieving work-life balance. By doing so, caring leaders create a supportive work environment that enhances teachers' trust in and satisfaction with the organization, thereby strengthening both their affective commitment and normative commitment. Additionally, leaders' fair behavior and transparent communication help reduce teachers' turnover intentions and enhance their continuance commitment. Research has found that the warmth and humanistic care characteristics of organizational culture when promoted by caring leadership, have a significant impact on teachers' organizational commitment (Abou Ramdan & Eid, 2020).

(2) Impact of Caring Leadership on Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness serves as the prerequisite for trust and is reflected in teachers' subjective evaluations of a leader's ability, benevolence, and integrity (Mayer et al., 1995). Caring leadership inherently possesses advantages in these dimensions. On the one hand, the empathetic behaviors, active listening, and continuous support for teachers exhibited by caring leaders make teachers perceive their benevolence (Paauwe, 2022). On the other hand, their consistency in management, moral judgment, and adherence to organizational values reinforce the leader's image of integrity. Research points out that a leader's trustworthiness is the foundation for the establishment of teachers' trust. In educational institutions, the caring behaviors demonstrated by principals are interpreted by teachers as moral commitments. These caring behaviors enhance teachers' trust in the school leadership group. Moreover, leaders' recognition and encouragement of teachers' abilities also strengthen teachers' acknowledgment of their managerial competence, thus comprehensively enhancing their overall trustworthiness (Louis et al., 2016).

(3) Impact of Caring Leadership on Team Psychological Capital

Team psychological capital is an aggregated expression of individual psychological capital at the team level, encompassing team efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism (Luthans et al., 2005). Caring leadership influences team efficacy and hope. By instilling confidence and support in team members, leadership enhances team resilience and optimism. When an organization encounters difficulties and problems, caring leadership can stimulate team collaboration and creativity, thereby boosting team psychological capital. By actively fostering a supportive, respectful, and highly collaborative organizational environment, caring leadership significantly enhances the sense of trust and emotional connection among team members, providing a solid social foundation for the development of team

psychological capital. Research indicates that leaders' caring behaviors in handling conflicts, alleviating work pressure, and strengthening teachers' sense of belonging not only promote mutual assistance among team members but also enhance their ability to cope with challenges (Bairamova et al., 2024). Caring leadership, which emphasizes empowerment and motivation, effectively evokes team members' hope and confidence in achieving goals. Scholars have pointed out that whether leaders care about the growth and development of team members is one of the key variables influencing the differences in the dimensions of team psychological capital (Bairamova et al., 2024; Li, 2024).

(4) Impact of Caring Leadership on Well-Being

Caring leadership, characterized by empathy, support, and consideration for the well-being of teachers, has been shown to have a significant impact on well-being. The impact of caring leadership on well-being was explored from multiple perspectives, focusing on emotional support, job satisfaction, and organizational culture.

Research suggests that leaders who exhibit caring behaviors, such as providing emotional support, active listening, and personal concern for teachers, create an environment that fosters positive emotions and psychological safety. This emotional support is crucial in reducing job stress and enhancing psychological resilience, which are key components of individual well-being. Caring leaders can help teachers manage work-related challenges by offering both emotional and instrumental support, which contributes to increased life satisfaction and psychological health (Luthans et al., 2007). Studies also indicate that teachers who perceive their leaders as caring are more likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and overall well-being (Wang et al., 2022). In addition, caring leadership can promote positive psychological capital, such as hope and optimism, which has been linked to better coping mechanisms in the face of workplace adversity (Avey et al., 2011).

Caring leadership is pivotal in creating a supportive and cohesive environment that enhances collective well-being. A leader who prioritizes the well-being of team members can foster trust, open communication, and collaboration. These factors are essential in building a strong team dynamic that reduces interpersonal conflicts and enhances cooperation (Wang et al., 2022). Caring leadership encourages a team atmosphere where individuals feel valued and supported, which contributes to greater job satisfaction and emotional well-being. The positive emotional contagion that stems from a caring leader can spread across the team, boosting morale and improving overall team performance. Thus, caring leadership has a dual impact: it directly improves the well-being of individual team members while also creating a more harmonious and productive work environment.

Caring leadership played a critical role in shaping a positive organizational culture that values employee well-being. Leaders who demonstrate caring behaviors contribute to the development of a culture that emphasizes inclusivity, mutual respect, and emotional intelligence. Such cultures enhance individual job satisfaction and improve organizational performance by fostering employee engagement, commitment, and retention (Luthans et al., 2007). Moreover, caring leadership encourages the design of work processes that align with teachers' personal values and needs, such as offering flexible work arrangements, providing professional development opportunities, and ensuring a healthy work-life balance. These practices directly contribute to the long-term well-being of teachers and create an organizational environment where teachers feel secure and motivated to perform at their best.

Caring leadership promotes psychological safety, a critical element in fostering well-being within organizations. Psychological safety refers to an environment where teachers feel safe to take risks, share ideas, and make mistakes without fear of judgment or negative consequences. Leaders who care about their teachers' welfare are more likely to create such an environment, allowing teachers to thrive personally and professionally. As research by Bishop et al. (2008) suggests, teachers who feel psychologically safe are more likely to engage in behaviors that promote innovation, problem-solving, and collaboration and contribute to their sense of purpose and well-being.

2.8.2 Impact of Organizational Commitment on Employee Performance, Well-Being

(1) Impact of Organizational Commitment on Employee Performance

Organizational commitment refers to the psychological state of teachers' sense of identification, loyalty, and willingness to stay with an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Research indicates a significant positive correlation between organizational commitment and employee performance. When teachers have a high level of affective commitment toward the organization, they exhibit initiative, responsibility, and dedication. This is reflected in high-quality output and high task performance at work. It is believed that teachers with high organizational commitment are willing to invest extra effort, thereby demonstrating high levels of organizational citizenship behavior. Although such behavior is not included in performance evaluations, it plays a crucial role in the overall performance environment (Wang et al., 2022). While continuance commitment may keep teachers in the organization due to a lack of alternatives, its performance-driving effect is weaker than that of affective commitment. Normative commitment, on the other hand, motivates teachers to fulfill their duties through a sense of moral responsibility, enhancing task completion. Therefore, differences in the types of organizational commitment led to varying performance outcomes (Ahmad, 2014).

(2) Impact of Organizational Commitment on Well-Being

Well-being, as an important indicator for measuring teachers' mental health and life satisfaction, has garnered increasing attention in organizational behavior research. Studies have shown a close relationship between organizational commitment and employee well-being (Meyer et al., 2002). When teachers feel valued and respected by the organization, they are more likely to develop a sense of belonging and self-worth psychologically. This positive cognition enhances their subjective well-being. Affective commitment is correlated with well-being because teachers' willingness to stay with the organization is based on emotional connections and identification with the organizational culture (Bishop et al., 2008). Such teachers usually also experience more positive emotions within the organization. When organizations enhance teachers' commitment through effective incentive systems, career development paths, and fair management mechanisms, the improvement in employee well-being is also significant. Commitment can also reduce teachers' emotional exhaustion and job burnout, thereby enhancing their psychological resilience and life satisfaction (Ilyas et al., 2022).

2.8.3 Impact of Trustworthiness on Employee Performance and Well-Being

(1) Impact of Trustworthiness on Employee Performance

In organizational behavior research, trustworthiness is defined as the quality that makes

a person or organization perceived as trustworthy by others, including ability, integrity, and benevolence (Mayer et al., 1995). Research indicates that trustworthiness is a key antecedent variable that promotes employee performance. When leaders are perceived by teachers as highly trustworthy, teachers are willing to rely on their judgments in uncertain environments, thereby enhancing work engagement and task execution. The high trustworthiness of leaders helps establish psychological safety, reducing teachers' anxiety and defensive behaviors during task execution and enabling them to focus more on achieving performance goals. Trustworthiness can strengthen teachers' identification with and willingness to implement organizational goals. This trusting atmosphere encourages knowledge sharing, collaborative cooperation, and innovative behaviors, enhancing team performance and individual output. Meanwhile, trustworthiness plays a crucial role in performance feedback and management, being considered one of the mediating factors in the effective leadership-performance improvement mechanism (Holley et al., 2018).

(2) Impact of Trustworthiness on Well-Being

Trustworthiness plays a significant role in performance outcomes and affects teachers' subjective well-being. Research shows that when teachers perceive leaders as highly trustworthy, their inherent sense of security, belongingness, and self-worth is greatly enhanced. This leads to increased psychological well-being and emotional stability. Trustworthy management usually fosters a fair, open, and inclusive organizational atmosphere (Robles et al., 2020). Such an atmosphere helps alleviate teachers' emotional exhaustion and job burnout. Trustworthiness is closely related to the perception of organizational support. When teachers believe that the organization makes fair and transparent decisions and provides support during difficulties, they are more likely to maintain a positive attitude towards work and life satisfaction (Robbins, 2016). This indicates that in a high-trustworthiness atmosphere, teachers can maintain better psychological resilience when facing high-pressure tasks, thus exhibiting high occupational well-being.

2.8.4 Impact of Team Psychological Capital on Employee Performance，Well-Being

(1) Impact of Team Psychological Capital on Employee Performance

Team psychological capital refers to the collective psychological state formed through interaction, mutual support, and positive engagement among team members, typically encompassing four core dimensions: team efficacy, team hope, team optimism, and team resilience (Luthans et al., 2005). Relevant research indicates that a high level of team psychological capital can significantly enhance teachers' confidence and motivation in task execution, thereby improving overall performance. In environments with high team psychological capital, members tend to exhibit stronger goal-oriented behaviors and a sense of responsibility, as they believe that the team can address challenges and achieve goals. This belief not only stimulates individual performance improvement but also strengthens team collaboration efficiency. When the team encounters difficulties, the "resilience" dimension of team psychological capital can help the team quickly recover from setbacks and maintain a high level of work efficiency. Therefore, team psychological capital is not only an important psychological resource for employee performance but also a structural advantage (Peng et al., 2024).

(2) Impact of Team Psychological Capital on Well-Being

The impact of team psychological capital on employee well-being is reflected in the supportive environment and positive emotional atmosphere it creates. Research suggests that when a team possesses high levels of hope, optimism, and resilience, it enhances overall well-being. This positive atmosphere strengthens teachers' sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and social satisfaction, enabling individuals to find meaning and value in their work, thereby achieving psychological fulfillment. Team psychological capital also acts as a buffer against stress. When facing high workloads, teams with high psychological capital can provide more emotional support and problem-solving strategies. Teams with high psychological capital prevent members from slipping into burnout, thus maintaining a high level of mental health. Team psychological capital is one of the important sources of teachers' subjective well-being. Through positive interactions at the collective level, psychological capital enhances individuals' satisfaction with the organization and work (Tan et al., 2020).

2.8.5 Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is a crucial construct that bridges the psychological contract between an organization and its teachers. In recent years, it has been regarded as a key mediating variable in organizational behavior research. Empirical studies have demonstrated that organizational commitment serves as a bridge and transformer in the pathways between various leadership styles, organizational support, and employee performance. The influence of leadership styles on employee performance, well-being, and organizational citizenship behavior does not occur directly but is realized through enhancing teachers' sense of identification and belonging with the organization. The three-dimensional commitment theory proposed by Meyer & Allen (1991) lays the foundation for this research approach. Teachers' willingness to continue serving in the organization and their sustained investment in achieving organizational goals largely depends on the strength of their affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Research consistently confirms that this commitment plays an explanatory mediating role among various variables.

In studies exploring the relationship between transformational leadership and employee work outcomes, transformational leaders indirectly enhance teachers' organizational commitment levels by cultivating an inspiring vision and demonstrating individualized consideration, thereby improving their work performance and extra-role behaviors. In the process by which workplace support mechanisms influence employee well-being, organizational commitment is an indispensable mediating variable. It connects the resources provided by the organization with teachers' psychological responses, subsequently affecting their job satisfaction and motivation.

Organizational commitment has also been proven to play a regulatory and transmissive role in the processes by which variables such as psychological capital and trust influence employee behavior and performance. When teachers possess high levels of psychological capital, including hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience, they tend to develop positive emotions toward the organization (Vanhala et al., 2016). This emotional attachment is a key driving force for enhancing their performance and emotional well-being. Trust models indicate that while trust can enhance the willingness to cooperate, organizational commitment is the core mechanism that transforms trust perceptions into performance behaviors. In educational contexts, the mediating role of teachers' organizational commitment has also garnered increasing attention. Research on the influence of school leadership on teachers'

motivation and teaching behaviors has found that leadership styles enhance teachers' emotional identification with the school, thereby boosting their teaching enthusiasm and levels of student interaction, ultimately promoting the overall performance of the school (Herachwati & Rachma, 2018).

As a robust and widely applicable mediating variable, organizational commitment is considered an important mechanism connecting external incentives with internal responses in corporate and educational management. It provides solid theoretical and empirical support for explaining the internal psychological and behavioral dynamics within organizations.

2.8.6 Mediating Role of Trustworthiness

In organizational behavior and management research, trustworthiness is a perceptual characteristic variable that has gradually been recognized as a critical mediating mechanism in recent years. It serves as a bridge between leadership behaviors, organizational climate, and employee outcome variables. The mediating role of trustworthiness has been empirically validated across multiple domains. When explaining how leadership behaviors translate into employee performance, satisfaction, and loyalty, the mediating role of trustworthiness has received increasing attention.

Trustworthiness is widely applied in the field of leadership research. In the influence of leadership styles on employee trust and behavioral performance, leaders' trustworthiness affects teachers' judgments about their intentions and capabilities. These judgments are then transformed into trust in the organization and positive behaviors. Trustworthiness plays a pivotal mediating role in the pathway from leadership to trust and ultimately to performance. If teachers perceive their leaders as trustworthy in terms of competence, honesty, and care, they are willing to engage in high-performance behaviors even under the pressure of organizational policies. Trustworthiness also mediates the relationship between organizational support, cultural construction, and employee attitudes (Shahriar et al., 2020). Research on organizational justice and employee job satisfaction has found that the trustworthiness demonstrated by organizations in areas such as resource allocation, communication mechanisms, and feedback systems significantly enhances teachers' well-being. Such studies indicate that trustworthiness is a prerequisite for trust and a key mechanism for translating organizational institutional advantages into employee behavioral motivation (Zhang et al., 2025).

In research related to team psychological capital, trustworthiness also plays a synergistic role. Teachers' ability to predict the behaviors of other members of the organization, their judgments about others' benevolence, and their perceptions of others' integrity can effectively enhance internal team cohesion and the sharing of psychological resources. In educational organizations, teachers' perceptions of the trustworthiness of school management, colleagues, and systems are important factors explaining their willingness to actively participate in teaching and research activities, accept reform policies, and continue serving the school. If teachers perceive that managers possess qualities such as competence, fairness, and care—that is, if they are perceived as trustworthy—this trustworthiness forms the basis of trust in the organization, which in turn influences their organizational commitment, teaching performance, and occupational well-being (Chin et al., 2023).

As a mediating variable, trustworthiness builds a bridge that integrates cognitive and emotional aspects between individuals and organizations. It can explain the mechanisms by which leadership behaviors influence employee attitudes and behaviors, and it can also

transform institutional and cultural advantages into drivers of organizational performance.

2.8.7 Mediating Role of Team Psychological Capital

In recent years, the academic community has accumulated a wealth of research findings on the mediating role of team psychological capital in organizational behavior. Team psychological capital is a collective-level positive psychological resource that encompasses core dimensions such as team efficacy, team hope, team resilience, and team optimism. It reflects the positive psychological states and capabilities of team members driven by shared goals. Research suggests that team psychological capital is a crucial factor in enhancing team performance and member well-being, playing a mediating role in various organizational relationships and behavioral pathways.

Team psychological capital serves as a key bridge in the relationship between leadership behavior and team performance. By cultivating a supportive and motivating work environment, leaders can enhance team psychological capital, thereby improving team cohesion, innovation capabilities, and overall performance. For instance, caring leadership fosters positive emotions and self-efficacy among team members, promoting increases in team hope and optimism, which in turn enhance collaborative efficiency and performance outcomes. Thus, team psychological capital acts as a mediating mechanism connecting leadership styles to successful team performance (Heled et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2021).

Team psychological capital also exhibits a significant mediating role between organizational support and employee attitudes. The resources and emotional support provided by the organization can elevate team members' psychological capital levels, enhancing their engagement and well-being. Based on a shared positive psychological state, team members demonstrate stronger senses of belonging and willingness to cooperate, fostering a harmonious atmosphere and job satisfaction within the organization. The enhancement of team psychological capital effectively translates organizational support into positive psychological and behavioral outcomes for teachers (Chen et al., 2023).

Moreover, team psychological capital plays a mediating role in the relationship between team trust and team performance. Studies indicate that high levels of team psychological capital can strengthen trust among members, facilitating information sharing and knowledge dissemination, thereby driving team innovation and excellence (Uen et al., 2021). Team psychological capital bolsters members' resilience in addressing challenges and their ability to adapt to changes, enabling teams to exhibit stronger synergistic effects and creativity when confronted with complex tasks.

As a collective positive psychological resource, team psychological capital permeates various organizational variables, including leadership behavior, organizational support, team trust, and performance, playing a vital mediating role. It holds significant theoretical and practical value in promoting organizational goal achievement, enhancing employee well-being.

2.9 Research on Preschool Education and Leadership Practices in Weifang

According to the Statistical Bulletin on the Development of Education in Weifang City (2023), the city has achieved remarkable progress, with 3,236 kindergartens and a gross enrollment of approximately 542,000 children, while the coverage rate of inclusive kindergartens has reached 89.1%. This indicates strong government commitment but also exposes challenges such as urban–rural disparities, teacher turnover, and inconsistent management quality.

Several local studies have highlighted these dilemmas. For instance, Zhang (2021), in a survey of township kindergartens in Weifang, found that although infrastructure investment had improved significantly, teachers frequently reported a lack of emotional support and professional identity, leading to high job mobility. Similarly, Liu and Chen (2022) analyzed the implementation of the Inclusive Preschool Education Enhancement Project in Shandong and pointed out that compared with Jinan and Qingdao, Weifang kindergartens showed a stronger reliance on administrative-style management, with less attention to teachers' well-being and developmental needs. At the same time, pilot cases from Hanting District and Changle County demonstrated that introducing caring practices significantly reduced teacher burnout and resignation rates (Weifang Education Bureau, 2022). These practical explorations suggest that caring leadership has the potential to improve organizational culture and teaching stability in the local context.

Nevertheless, current literature on preschool education leadership in Weifang remains largely descriptive, focusing on policy implementation or resource allocation. There is still a lack of empirical research examining the mechanisms through which leadership styles, particularly caring leadership, influence teachers' organizational commitment, trust, and well-being. This research gap makes it necessary to integrate Weifang's unique experiences with broader theoretical frameworks. By situating caring leadership as the independent variable and linking it to mediating mechanisms such as organizational commitment, trustworthiness, and team psychological capital, the present study not only addresses a local practical issue but also contributes to the enrichment of leadership research in China's preschool education sector.

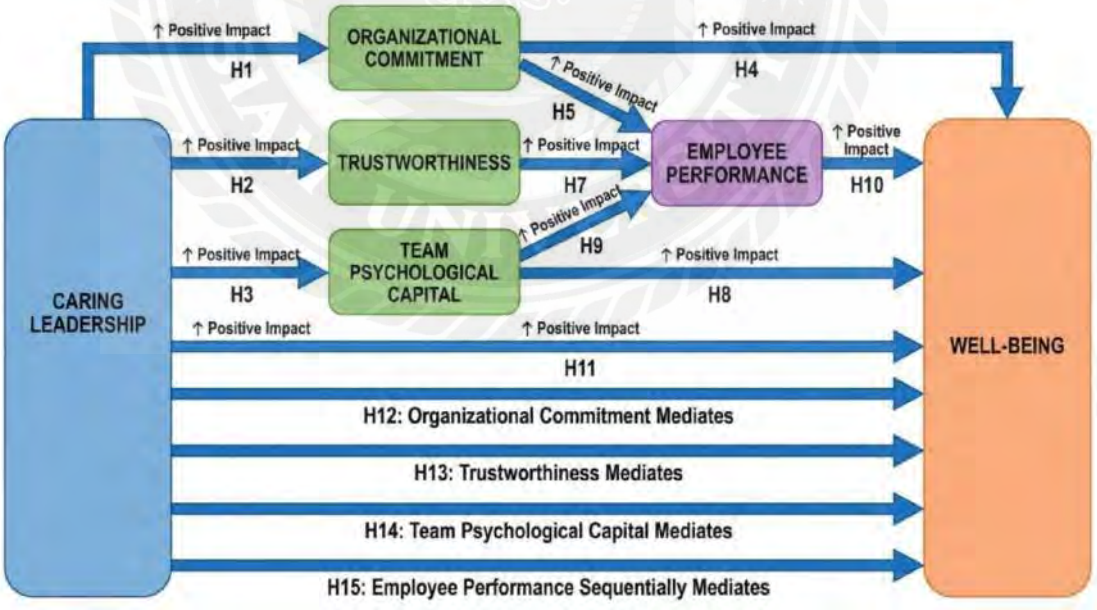


Figure 2.5 Research Framework

2.10 Conceptual Framework, Hypothesis and Explanation of Hypothesis

The conceptual framework of this study revolves around the core variables and their interrelationships, aiming to systematically explore the influence mechanism of caring leadership on well-being. The framework is designed based on organizational behavior and positive psychology theories, reflecting the dynamic pathways among leadership behavior, organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, and well-being.

Caring leadership, as a pivotal leadership style, embodies leaders' emotional care, understanding, and support for teachers, serving as a crucial source for inspiring positive attitudes and behaviors among staff. The study hypothesizes that caring leadership not only directly promotes the development of psychological capital among organizational members but also indirectly enhances employee performance and well-being by elevating organizational commitment and strengthening trustworthiness.

Organizational commitment, representing individuals' emotional attachment and identification with the organization, serves as an intrinsic driver of teachers' positive behaviors. The research framework positions organizational commitment as a mediating variable through which caring leadership influences employee performance and well-being, further impacting the realization of well-being.

Trustworthiness, which reflects the degree of trust organizational members have in leaders and colleagues, is incorporated into the model as a key factor in fostering a collaborative organizational atmosphere and promoting positive team interactions.

Team psychological capital is a collective-level positive psychological resource that reflects the overall state of team members in terms of self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. It is influenced not only by leadership behavior and organizational commitment but also acts as an important mediating variable in promoting employee performance and well-being, thereby driving the overall excellence of the school.

Employee performance and well-being, as critical outcome variables directly affecting school development, reflect individuals' contributions and psychological states within the organization. They are the result of the combined effects of caring leadership and mediating variables, while also providing feedback that influences the dynamic balance between organizational commitment and team psychological capital.

The research model emphasizes the core driving role of leadership behavior while highlighting the mediating mechanisms of individual and team psychological states within the organization on performance and well-being. Drawing from the literature review, the relationships among the variables have been sorted out, and the conceptual model is illustrated in Figure 2.7.

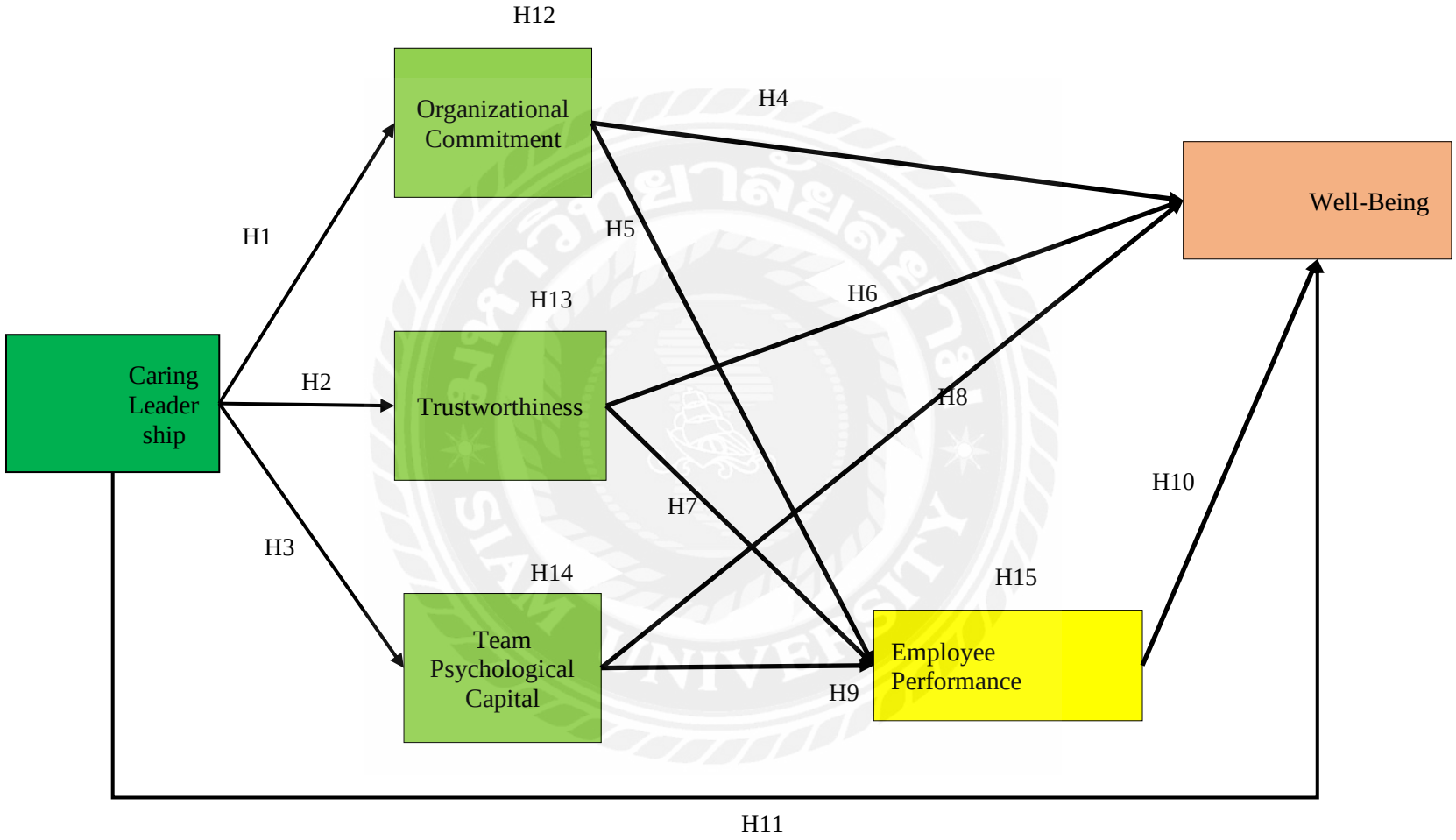


Figure 2.6 Conceptual Framework

From the above framework, a number of hypotheses are formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Caring Leadership has a positive impact on Organizational Commitment.

Hypothesis 2: Caring Leadership has a positive impact on Trustworthiness.

Hypothesis 3: Caring Leadership has a positive impact on Team Psychological Capital.

Hypothesis 4: Organizational Commitment has a positive impact on Well-Being.

Hypothesis 5: Organizational Commitment has a positive impact on Employee Performance.

Hypothesis 6: Trustworthiness has a positive impact on Well-Being.

Hypothesis7: Trustworthiness has a positive impact on Employee Performance.

Hypothesis 8: Team Psychological Capital has a positive impact on Well-Being.

Hypothesis 9: Team Psychological Capital has a positive impact on Employee Performance.

Hypothesis 10: Employee Performance has a positive impact on Well-Being.

Hypothesis 11: Caring Leadership has a positive impact on Well-Being.

Hypothesis 12: Organizational Commitment mediates the relationship between Caring Leadership and Well-Being.

Hypothesis 13: Trustworthiness mediates the relationship between Caring Leadership and Well-Being.

Hypothesis 14: Team Psychological Capital mediates the relationship between Caring Leadership and Well-Being.

Hypothesis 15: Employee Performance sequentially mediates the relationship between Caring Leadership and Well-Being.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter conducts a comprehensive literature review on the variables under investigation. The literature review primarily encompasses the definitions, measurement dimensions, and relevant research about caring leadership, organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, and well-being. The interactions and dynamic relationships among each of these variables are summarized and elaborated upon in the study. Ultimately, this chapter constructs a research model that explores the relationship between variables.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methods adopted, population and sampling methods, data collection, operationalization of variables, questionnaire pretesting, research hypotheses, analytical models, and statistical analysis methods.

This chapter is divided into four sections as follow:

3.1 Research Design

3.2 Quantitative Research

3.3 Qualitative Research

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach to explore the relationships between the key variables. The quantitative research aimed to determine the correlations among variables including caring leadership, organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, and well-being. By using statistical techniques, the study provided a clear picture of the strength and direction of these relationships, helping to establish the overall framework of the research.

The qualitative research focused on exploring the deeper meanings behind these correlations and discussed the validity of the findings through interviews and discussions with participants. This part of the study helped identify the underlying mechanisms that contributed to well-being in the workplace, specifically in the context of Weifang. Additionally, it proposed strategies for improving employee well-being based on the qualitative insights gained.

The research process was divided into two distinct phases: the quantitative phase, which focused on collecting and analyzing numerical data, and the qualitative phase, which focused on gathering rich, descriptive data to complement the quantitative results. By integrating both approaches, the study ensured a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research questions.

Part 1: Quantitative Method

This study aimed to explore the underlying mechanisms through which caring leadership influences organizational commitment, trustworthiness, and team psychological capital, as well as the pathways by which it affects employee performance, and well-being. The structural equation modeling approach was employed in this research, and a questionnaire was constructed based on multiple classical scales.

For caring leadership, the scale developed by Louis et al. (2016) was used. This scale comprises five dimensions: being kind to others, appreciating uniqueness, promoting self-actualization, safeguarding common interests, and charismatic inspiration, with a total of 27 items.

Organizational commitment was assessed using the three-dimensional structural model proposed by Meyer and Allen (1991), which includes affective, continuance, and normative commitment, totaling 23 items.

Trustworthiness was based on the classic trust model of Mayer et al. (1995), encompassing three dimensions: competence, benevolence, and integrity, with 17 items.

Team psychological capital was measured using the four-dimensional structure proposed by Avey et al. (2011), including team self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism, with 12 items.

Employee performance was assessed according to the three-dimensional model of Borman & Motowidlo (1997), which consists of task performance, contextual performance, and learning performance, with 12 items.

Well-being was measured using the Teacher Professional Well-being Scale developed by Joan et al. (2004). This scale covers four dimensions: achievement display, work recognition, work attractiveness, and emotional support, with 16 items.

By systematically integrating the above variables, this study constructed a multilevel and structurally sound theoretical model to empirically test the pathways and mediating mechanisms among the variables, thereby providing a theoretical basis and measurement tool support for educational management practices.

A conceptual framework was then developed for this study. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale. Reliability, validity, and relevance tests were conducted on the questionnaire, followed by data collection and statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics and structural equation modeling were used for data analysis.

Part 2: Qualitative Method

The qualitative phase was conducted to further explain and enrich the quantitative findings obtained from the structural equation modeling analysis. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with eight key informants, including kindergarten principals, senior teachers, and administrative staff from public and private kindergartens in Weifang. The sampling was adopted to select participants who possessed extensive experience in kindergarten management and educational practice. The interviews mainly focused on understanding how caring leadership influenced employee well-being, organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, and employee performance in practical educational settings. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed for analysis. The collected qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis supported by NVivo software. Through coding, categorization, and theme development, the study identified major patterns and interpretations related to caring leadership and employee well-being. The qualitative findings were used to triangulate and validate the quantitative results, thereby providing a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which caring leadership contributed to employee well-being in kindergartens.

3.2 Quantitative Research

3.2.1 Population and Sampling Methods

The population comprised kindergarten faculty and staff in Weifang City, Shandong Province, China, encompassing public and private kindergartens. According to the statistical

bulletin released by the Weifang Municipal Education Bureau in 2023, there were 3,236 kindergartens in Weifang City, with a total number of early childhood education practitioners exceeding 45,445, forming a vast workforce in the field of preschool education.

To ensure the representativeness and scientific nature of the study, the research primarily focused on two categories of personnel who play pivotal roles in the organizational operation of kindergartens: kindergarten principals (or persons in charge) and front-line teachers along with other faculty and staff.

Kindergarten principals in charge, as the core leadership force in the management and development of kindergartens, are key figures in organizational decision-making, teacher management, and shaping campus culture. The caring leadership behaviors they exhibit serve as the main independent variables in this study. Through means such as support, listening, and motivation in their daily management, principals exert a direct influence on teachers, playing a significant role in their psychological experiences and organizational behaviors.

Kindergarten teachers and staff are the implementers of educational activities in kindergartens and the primary group that perceives and responds to leadership behaviors. Their organizational commitment, perceptions of leadership trustworthiness, team psychological capital, job performance, and well-being are the key dependent and mediating variables examined in this study. These variables reflect the status and contributions of individual teachers within the organization and mirror the manifestation of organizational excellence.

In this study, to ensure the data quality required for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis and the statistical power of the sample size, a convenience sampling method was adopted. This approach scientifically determined the sample size while guaranteeing population representativeness.

This study employed convenience sampling, with different kindergartens in Weifang City serving as the primary stratification criterion. The sampling process was designed as follows:

Based on the distribution of kindergartens in Weifang City, the top 25 kindergartens released by the Weifang Municipal Education Bureau were selected as the research sample pool. Then, kindergartens from each district or county were proportionally selected as sample units. Within each kindergarten, the sample size was determined by the relative number of teachers, and proportional sampling was applied accordingly. It is important to note that the figures presented in Table 3.1 represent the planned number of distributed questionnaires, rather than the actual number of valid questionnaires collected. In the survey process, variations in response and participation rates across kindergartens inevitably occurred. Therefore, the final data analysis was conducted based on the number of valid responses collected, not on the projected numbers shown in the table. Additionally, for kindergartens with relatively small staff sizes, if strictly proportional allocation had been adopted, the resulting sample size would have been too small for statistical modeling and structural equation estimation. To address this, the sampling proportion was appropriately increased in smaller kindergartens to ensure sufficient representativeness and reliability of the data. This adjustment did not affect the validity of the stratified sampling strategy, as the final analyses still relied on valid returned questionnaires.

The research model in this study encompasses seven latent variables (caring leadership, organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee well-being, employee performance) and 125 measurement indicators.

In structural equation modeling, to guarantee the reliability of parameter estimation, the sample size to the number of estimated parameters should be at least 5:1. To ensure the validity of the significance tests, the ratio should be at least 10:1 (Joan et al. 2004). Some scholars have also suggested that for structural equation models with continuous data and a normal distribution using maximum likelihood estimation, the n: q rule (where n is the sample size and q is the number of parameters to be estimated in the model) can be applied to roughly determine the required sample size. The recommended ratio is 20:1, which can be relaxed to 10:1.

Accordingly, the minimum required sample size was calculated as:

$$N_{\min} = q \times r$$

Where q represents the number of measurement indicators (125 in this study), and r represents the recommended ratio of sample size to parameters (set at 5, 10, or 20).

$$N_{\min} = 125 \times 5 = 625$$

$$N_{\min} = 125 \times 10 = 1250$$

$$N_{\min} = 125 \times 20 = 2500$$

This study involved seven latent and 125 observed variables, necessitating a minimum sample size of 660. Generally, a larger sample size is conducive to estimating and testing complex models. Therefore, this study used 700 samples for the formal survey. For these 700 respondents, proportional sampling was conducted based on the number of teachers in each kindergarten. The calculation formula is as follows.

$$Sample\ size = \frac{Sample\ size \times pupulation\ of\ each\ Kindergartens}{total\ population}$$

Table 3.1 Stratification of the Sample Size

No	Kindergarten	Location	Population	Sample
1	Weifang Experimental Kindergarten	Weicheng District	68	45
2	Weifang Municipal Organs First Kindergarten	Quiwen District	60	40
3	Weifang Beihai Kindergarten	Gaoxin District	52	35
4	Weifang Quiwen Experimental Kindergarten	Quiwen District	45	30
5	Weifang Economic Development Zone First Kindergarten	Jingkai District	50	33

No	Kindergarten	Location	Population	Sample
6	Weifang Future Star Kindergarten (Gaoxin District Park)	Gaoxin District	44	29
7	Weifang Binhai New District Organ Kindergarten	Binhai District	42	28
8	Weifang Hanting District Second Experimental Kindergarten	Hanting District	39	26
9	Weifang Changyi Municipal Organ Kindergarten	Changyi	41	27
10	Weifang Fangzi District New Star Kindergarten	Fangzi District	38	25
11	Weifang Zhucheng Experimental Kindergarten	Zhucheng	48	32
12	Weifang Shouguang Municipal Organs First Kindergarten	Shouguang	53	35
13	Weifang Anqiu Sunshine Kindergarten	Anqiu	36	24
14	Weifang Qingzhou City No.1 Kindergarten	Qingzhou	55	37
15	Weifang Linqu County Organ Kindergarten	Linqu County	34	23
16	Weifang Changle County Experimental Kindergarten	Changle County	40	27
17	Weifang Quiwen District Beiyuan Kindergarten	Quiwen District	35	23
18	Weifang Hengxin Kindergarten	Weicheng District	33	22
19	Weifang Fangzi District Future Kindergarten	Fangzi District	30	21
20	Weifang Hanting District Hope Kindergarten	Hanting District	31	21
21	Weifang Economic Zone Dongfanghong Kindergarten	Jingkai District	34	23
22	Weifang Shouguang Mingde Kindergarten	Shouguang	32	21
23	Weifang North Star Bilingual Kindergarten	Gaoxin District	38	25
24	Weifang Changyi Second Experimental Kindergarten	Changyi	35	23
25	Weifang Qingzhou Experimental Kindergarten	Qingzhou	37	25
Total			**1050**	**700**

3.2.2 Research Instrument and Construction

The instrument for quantitative research is a survey questionnaire designed to collect data from 25 representative kindergarten in Shandong Province.

The questionnaire is structured into two parts.

Part 1: This section captures demographic information of the respondents, including gender, age, educational background, years of work experience, and job position. Statistical sampling requirements for the number of respondents from each kindergarten are outlined in the questionnaire.

Part 2: This section contains measurement items for each variable.

This study employed a structured questionnaire as the primary research instrument to measure the impact of caring leadership on organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, and well-being The questionnaire design was grounded in existing authoritative scales to ensure reliable reliability and validity. The sources of the scales for each variable are as follows:

For caring leadership, the five-dimensional scale proposed by Louis et al. (2016) was adopted, encompassing dimensions such as being kind to others, appreciating uniqueness, promoting self - self-actualization, safeguarding common interests, and charismatic inspiration. Organizational commitment was measured using the three-dimensional model developed by Meyer and Allen (1991). Trustworthiness was based on the trust model of Mayer et al. (1995), which includes three dimensions: competence, benevolence, and integrity. Team psychological capital was assessed using the four-dimensional model defined by Avey et al. (2011), namely team self-efficacy, team resilience, team hope, and team optimism. Employee performance was evaluated according to the three-dimensional model of task performance, contextual performance, and learning performance proposed by Borman & Motowidlo (1997). The well-being scale was developed by Joan et al. (2004), covering aspects such as achievement display, work recognition, work attractiveness, and emotional support.

All items in the questionnaire utilized a Likert five-point scale to reflect the respondents' levels of agreement. The questionnaire employs a five-point Likert scale, where 5 represents "Strongly Agree," 4 represents "Agree," 3 indicates a "Neutral" stance (neither agree nor disagree), 2 signifies "Disagree," and 1 stands for "Strongly Disagree."

3.2.3 Questionnaire Design

3.2.3.1 Independent Variables

The caring leadership scale proposed by Louis et al. (2016) is a structured assessment tool designed for high-emotional-engagement professional fields, such as education and healthcare. It aims to comprehensively evaluate leaders' performance emotional support, individual care, ethical norms, and organizational responsibilities. This scale is characterized by its complete structure, clear dimensions, and strong cultural adaptability, making it particularly suitable for assessing and diagnosing leadership behaviors within educational management in China.

The scale comprises five dimensions, with 25items, employing a Likert 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The five dimensions are as follows:

Being Good to Others (5 items): This dimension emphasizes the moral qualities of honesty, respect, and consideration that leaders should demonstrate in their daily management. It serves as a fundamental dimension reflecting humanistic care.

Appreciate Uniqueness (4 items): It focuses on whether leaders respect teachers' individuality and differences and encourage their self-expression and development.

Promoting Self-Actualization (4 items): This dimension reflects whether leaders create a supportive environment to help teachers realize their self-worth, enhance their abilities, and achieve accomplishments.

Maintaining the Shared Interest (3 items): It examines whether leaders pay attention to collective goals and promote team collaboration in their decision-making and management.

Charismatic Appeal (9 items): This dimension measures whether leaders possess emotional appeal, the power of role modeling, and the ability to unite the team. It is the most central and tension-filled part of the scale in leadership.

During the development and empirical validation, the scale demonstrated extremely high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's α of 0.994, indicating a strong correlation among the items and excellent reliability. Moreover, its construct validity and content validity were verified. The scale not only reflects the core connotations of Western caring leadership theories but also fully integrates the Eastern cultural emphasis on "benevolence," "emotional attachment," and "organizational ethics."

Table 3.2 Caring Leadership Measurement Scale

Dimension	**Measurement Item**	**Resource**
Being Good to Others	1. The principal treats teachers in a friendly and approachable manner.	Louis et al. (2016)
	2. The principal considers the actual situations of individual teachers and cares about their interests.	
	3. The principal is willing to listen and encourages teachers to express their true feelings.	
	4. The principal provides support when teachers face stress or negative emotions.	
	5. The principal communicates regularly with teachers to understand their work and personal needs.	
Appreciate Uniqueness	6. The principal recognizes and values teachers' professional contributions.	
	7. The principal praises teachers appropriately for their achievements.	
	8. The principal respects teachers and avoids embarrassing them in front of others.	
	9. The principal listens to teachers' opinions and adopts reasonable suggestions.	
Promoting Self-Actualization	10. The principal offers sincere advice for teachers' career development.	
	11. The principal helps teachers to set realistic and attainable career goals.	

Dimension	Measurement Item	Resource
	12. The principal provides opportunities and resources for teachers' growth.	
	13. The principal creates conditions that allow teachers to apply and develop their strengths.	
Maintaining the Shared Interest	14. The principal works to improve the overall working environment for teachers.	
	15. The principal encourages teamwork and guides teachers to collaborate effectively.	
	16. The principal protects teachers' legitimate rights and professional interests.	
Charismatic Appeal	17. The principal demonstrates strong professional competence in managing the kindergarten.	
	18. The principal remains calm and composed when facing difficulties.	
	19. The principal shows empathy and shares teachers' concerns and challenges.	
	20. The principal takes responsibility for decisions and outcomes at work.	
	21. The principal demonstrates passion and commitment to their work.	
	22. The principal is open-minded and innovative in educational management.	
	23. The principal treats all teachers fairly and equitably.	
	24. The principal provides guidance for teachers' professional advancement.	
	25.The principal has a broad vision and leads teachers in long-term professional development.	

3.2.3.2 Mediating Variable

(1) Organizational Commitment

Meyer and Allen (1991) created measures to assess organizational commitment components. Since the 1980s, commitment studies have utilized construct-based measurements. Many previous research has shown evidence of this scale's validity, and Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-dimensional model of organizational commitment shows strong construct and correlational validity among Chinese teachers. These data indicate that the model with three dimensions has some widespread application outside of the West. As a result, despite certain empirical issues, the overall findings clearly justify the ongoing use of these instruments in research. The organizational commitment scale consists of 23 questions separated into three dimensions: affective commitment, continuing commitment, and normative commitment.

Table 3.3 Organizational Commitments Scale

Dimension	Measurement Item	Resource
Affective Commitment	1.I feel happy to dedicate my career to this kindergarten.	Meyer and Allen (1991)
	2.I enjoy talking about my kindergarten with people outside.	
	3.I feel that the successes and difficulties of this kindergarten are my own.	
	4.I feel a strong sense of belonging to this kindergarten.	
	5.I have a deep personal attachment to this kindergarten.	
	6.I feel proud to be part of this kindergarten.	
	7. I feel emotionally connected with my colleagues in this kindergarten.	
	8.I would be disappointed if I had to leave this kindergarten.	
Continuance Commitment	9. I am concerned about the difficulties I would face if I left this kindergarten.	
	10. Even if I wanted to leave, it would not be easy to do so.	
	11. Leaving this kindergarten now would interrupt my professional relationships.	
	12. I stay at this kindergarten partly because leaving would require significant personal sacrifices.	
	13. I feel that my career options are limited if I were to leave this kindergarten.	
	14. I stay because finding a similar position elsewhere would be difficult.	
	15. Leaving this kindergarten would reduce my future professional opportunities.	
	16. I remain at this kindergarten because the costs of leaving outweigh the benefits.	
Normative Commitment	17. I feel a responsibility to remain loyal to this kindergarten.	
	18. Leaving this kindergarten for another opportunity feels wrong to me.	
	19. I continue working here because I believe loyalty is important.	
	20. I was taught to value loyalty to an organization like this kindergarten.	
	21. Staying with this kindergarten aligns with my personal sense of duty.	
	22. I feel it is ethically important to honor my commitment to this kindergarten.	
	23. I believe that being a dedicated teacher in this kindergarten is the right thing to do.	

(2) Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness scale by Mayer et al. (1995) measures how teachers perceive the trustworthiness of their leaders, based on three key dimensions:

Ability: Reflects the leader's skills, knowledge, and competence. For example, whether the leader is capable and confident in their role.

Benevolence: Assesses the leader's care and concern for employee well-being, such as showing empathy and offering support.

Integrity: Focuses on the leader's honesty, fairness, and consistency between words and actions.

The scale includes 17 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale, and is widely used for its reliability and clarity in evaluating leader credibility in organizational settings.

Table 3.4 Trustworthiness Measurement Scale

Dimension	**Measurement Item**	**Resource**
Ability	1.The principal is capable of performing their duties effectively.	Mayer et al.（1995）
	2.The principal has a strong track record of success in their responsibilities.	
	3.The principal demonstrates a deep understanding of tasks that need to be accomplished.	
	4.I have confidence in the principal's professional skills.	
	5.The principal possesses expertise that contributes to the kindergarten's performance.	
	6.The principal has extensive experience in educational management.	
Benevolence	7.The principal genuinely cares about my well-being.	
	8.The principal considers my professional needs and aspirations.	
	9.The principal would never intentionally do anything to harm me.	
	10.The principal shows concern for matters that are important to me.	
	11.The principal supports me when I face challenges at work.	
Integrity	12.The principal demonstrates fairness in decision-making and interactions.	
	13.I can trust the principal to honor commitments consistently.	
	14.The principal's actions align with their stated values.	
	15.The principal adheres to ethical principles in their work.	
	16.The principal acts with honesty and justice.	
	17.The principal's behavior reflects sound professional principles.	

(3) Team Psychological Capital

In this study, the measurement of team psychological capital (TPC) is based on the framework developed by Avey et al. (2011). TPC is defined as a team-level positive psychological state that emerges through daily interaction and cooperation among team members. It consists of four key dimensions: Team Confidence (belief in the team's abilities), Team Hope (shared goals and motivation to achieve them), Team Optimism (positive expectations for the future), and Team Resilience (ability to recover and adapt after setbacks). The scale includes 12 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale and is widely used to assess the collective psychological strength of teams in organizational contexts.

Table 3.5 Team Psychological Capital Measurement Scale

Dimension	**Measurement Item**	**Resource**
Team Confidence	1.During meetings with management, our team members confidently present issues within the scope of our work.	Avey et al. (2011)
	2.Our team believes that our contributions to discussions about the kindergarten's strategies are valuable.	
	3.We are confident that our team can accurately convey information to colleagues.	
Team Hope	4.Our team members actively pursue their work goals.	
	5.Our team can devise multiple approaches to achieve our objectives.	
	6.Our team successfully achieves its work goals.	
	7.When facing difficulties, our team can find multiple solutions to overcome challenges.	
Team Resilience	8.Our team can handle work tasks independently.	
	9.Our team generally remains composed under work-related stress.	
	10.Having overcome previous challenges, our team can face current difficulties effectively.	
Team Optimism	11.Our team members focus on the positive aspects of our work.	
	12.Our team is optimistic about the future development of our work.	

(4) Employee Performance

In this study, employee performance is measured using a 12-item scale developed based on the framework by Borman and Motowidlo (1997). The scale includes three key dimensions:

Task Performance: Refers to the employee's ability and efficiency in fulfilling assigned duties and achieving job-related goals within the scope of their role.

Relational Performance: Reflects the quality of the employee's interactions with colleagues, supervisors, and subordinates, emphasizing teamwork, communication, and

interpersonal skills.

Learning Performance: Captures the employee's developmental potential, focusing on self-improvement, willingness to acquire new knowledge, skill enhancement, and adaptability to organizational change.

Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale, and the instrument is designed to assess both behavioral and developmental aspects of employee performance.

Table 3.6 Employee Performance Measurement Scale

Dimension	**Measurement Item**	**Resource**
Task Performance	1.I consistently complete my teaching tasks efficiently and on time.	Borman & Motowidlo (1997)
	2.I fulfill my work to a high standard according to the kindergarten's performance requirements.	
	3.I possess the professional knowledge and skills required for effective teaching.	
	4.I dedicate my full energy to teaching activities.	
Relational Performance	5.I proactively assist colleagues with their work.	
	6.I adhere to all teaching regulations and professional standards.	
	7.Even without supervision, I willingly take on responsibilities beyond my assigned tasks.	
	8.I provide constructive suggestions for management decisions in the kindergarten.	
	9.I continuously learn new teaching knowledge and skills through various channels.	
Learning Performance	10.I apply newly acquired knowledge and skills to improve my teaching effectiveness.	
	11.I actively pursue learning opportunities to enhance my professional competence.	
	12.I reflect on my teaching practices and adjust methods to improve student outcomes.	

3.2.3.3 Dependent Variable

The well-being scale developed by Joan et al. (2004) is specifically designed to assess teachers' occupational well-being. The scale comprises four core dimensions:

Achievements measure the individual's sense of accomplishment and success in their professional role.

Job Recognition evaluates the degree to which teachers feel their work is valued and acknowledged by others.

Job Attraction assesses the extent to which teachers find their job interesting, engaging, and personally meaningful.

Emotional Support captures the perceived level of emotional care and support received from colleagues, leaders, and the organization.

Each dimension includes four items, with responses typically rated on a 5-point Likert scale, reflecting the frequency or intensity of the experience. The instrument offers a

comprehensive and structured approach to evaluating teachers' subjective well-being within the workplace context.

Table 3.7 Well-being Measurement Scale

Dimension	**Measurement item**	**Resource**
Achievements	1.I perceive that students enjoy attending my class.	Joan et al. (2004)
	2.The working atmosphere in my kindergarten is harmonious.	
	3.I am satisfied with the effectiveness of my teaching.	
	4.My role as a teacher allows me to feel relaxed and fulfilled.	
Job Recognition	5.My work receives support and encouragement from the leadership.	
	6.I believe that the courses I teach are well-received by students.	
	7.I have a positive relationship with the leadership team.	
	8.Teaching fills me with immense joy.	
Job Attraction	9.The classes I am responsible for achieve satisfactory academic results.	
	10.I enjoy interacting with students.	
	11.I am fond of the teaching profession.	
	12.When I encounter problems at work, I can obtain assistance from my superiors.	
Emotional Support	13.When I am in a poor mood, I receive understanding from students.	
	14.Students respect me and value my guidance.	
	15.I can sense that students genuinely like me.	
	16.Students thoroughly enjoy spending time in my class.	

3.2.4 Quality of Research Instrument

The questionnaire was tested for validity and reliability. Tests were conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaires.

3.2.4.1 Content Validity

Content Validity is a crucial indicator for assessing whether research instruments (such as questionnaires) accurately reflect the constructs or parameters involved in the research objectives. Its core lies in ensuring that the content of each item reasonably and accurately represents the areas of focus in the research. This study designed the survey questionnaire based on classic scales. Experts in the field were invited to review each item to judge its appropriateness and relevance. The questionnaire content was examined to comprehensively cover all key concepts or dimensions set out in the research. Items unrelated to the research or ambiguous ones were avoided to improve the quality of the questionnaire.

The Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was used to evaluate the relevance and fit of each item in the questionnaire with the research objectives.

The index comprises three types of scores: +1, 0, and -1, each with its distinct meaning as detailed below;

+1 means "the measurement item is congruent with the objectives of the study"

0 means "the measurement item is undecided with the objectives of the study"

-1 means "the measurement item is inconsistent with the objectives of the study"

$$IOC = \frac{\sum R}{n}$$

where IOC = Index of item-objective congruence value

R = Score from experts

ΣR = Total score from all experts

n = number of experts

Items with an Index of Objectives Congruence (IOC) score between 0.00 and 0.49 are not included in the questionnaire. Conversely, questions scoring above 0.50 on the IOC are deemed valid (content validation) items. This approach ensures that only the most appropriate and relevant questions are included in the assessment tool, thereby enhancing its content validity

3.2.4.2 Reliability Test

Reliability testing is a crucial step in ensuring that the research instruments used in this study produce consistent and dependable results. In this study, the internal consistency reliability of each measurement scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. A Cronbach's alpha value above 0.7 was considered acceptable, indicating that the items within each scale reliably measure the intended construct. High reliability coefficients suggest that the scale items are well correlated and consistently reflect the underlying dimension. This test was applied to all key constructs, including Caring Leadership, Organizational Commitment, Trustworthiness, Team Psychological Capital, Employee Performance, and Well-Being. The reliability test results provide confidence in the validity of the data collected and support the use of these instruments for further statistical analysis such as structural equation modeling.

3.2.5 Data Collection

The data collection process of this study was meticulously planned and rigorously executed to ensure the validity and representativeness of the data. The research team established communication channels with the Weifang Municipal Education Bureau, securing official support and leveraging its resources to contact public and private kindergartens within the target regions. Based on the sampling scheme designed in the preliminary stage, the research team selected kindergartens of varying sizes, types, and geographical distributions to guarantee the diversity and representativeness of the sample.

Data collection was conducted through multiple channels, primarily in the form of electronic questionnaires. The electronic questionnaires were distributed via email, allowing participants the flexibility to arrange their response time. Prior to distribution, the research

team provided a unified explanation for all questionnaires, elaborating on the research objectives, filling requirements, as well as the principles of anonymity and confidentiality for participation, thereby alleviating participants' concerns and enhancing the quality of the responses.

After the questionnaires were distributed, the researchers maintained close contact with the kindergarten management and teachers, regularly reminding and following up on the progress of questionnaire completion to ensure a high response rate. The collected questionnaires first underwent a preliminary screening process to eliminate invalid ones that were incomplete, logically incoherent, or had obvious filling errors. The entire data collection phase lasted approximately four weeks, and the final number of valid samples met the statistical criteria required for structural equation modeling analysis.

The research team promptly provided feedback and made adjustments to issues that arose during the data collection process, ensuring the integrity and scientific rigor of the data. This data collection process not only guaranteed the broadness of the sample but also laid a solid foundation for the subsequent reliability and validity tests of the scales and the construction of the model.

3.2.6 Statistical Methods of Analysis

This study conducted a systematic analysis of the questionnaire data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 23.0) to validate the research hypotheses. AMOS 23.0 was utilized to explore the complex relationships between variables. During the data analysis process, the collected data were coded and tabulated, laying the foundation for subsequent statistical tests. Descriptive statistics were employed to outline the characteristics of the sample, including frequency, percentage, mean, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation. These statistics provided an overview of the sample's overall distribution characteristics.

To verify the alignment between the measured variables and underlying constructs in the study, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was tested. CFA assumes the accuracy of the hypothesized variables and is used to assess the relationship between measured variables and latent structures. The rationality of the model was judged through fit indices such as chi-square, RMSEA, CFI, and others. This step validated whether the questionnaire design accurately measured the core constructs of the study. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was adopted to explore the relationships between variables. SEM is a comprehensive statistical technique that can simultaneously analyze the relationships between multiple independent and dependent variables. In this study, independent and dependent variables could be either measured or latent variables, providing great flexibility for modeling complex relationships. Through path analysis and covariance structure analysis, SEM revealed the direct relationships between variables and allowed for the exploration of effects between latent variables. AMOS 23.0 software was used for SEM analysis in this study. The evaluation criteria for the overall fit of the SEM model are shown in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8 Evaluation Criteria for the Overall Model Fitness of SEM

Fitting Index	Standard or Critical Value
x^2	Significance probability value $p > 0.05$
x2/df	Between 1 and 3

Fitting Index	Standard or Critical Value
GFI	> 0.90 or above
AGFI	> 0.90 or above
RMSEA	< 0.50
NFI	> 0.90 or above
IFI	> 0.90 or above
CFI	> 0.90 or above

In this study, to ensure the scientific validity of the measurement instrument and the rationality of the structural model, the following data analysis methods were used in sequence: confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), structural validity testing, discriminant validity testing, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), and path analysis.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to conduct model testing on the relationships among all latent variables and their corresponding items, aiming to verify whether the theoretically postulated structural model could achieve a high degree of fit with the sample data. The purpose of the CFA was to validate the fitting relationships between various dimensions and observed variables. Model reasonableness was assessed using fit indices (such as CFI, TLI, RMSEA, etc.), providing a theoretical foundation for subsequent analyses.

Based on the CFA validation, this study examined the construct validity of the scales, encompassing both convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was evaluated through standardized factor loadings to ascertain whether the items could collectively and effectively explain their respective dimensions. Subsequently, discriminant validity was analyzed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the HTMT ratio method to ensure that each latent variable exhibited good discriminability, thereby avoiding construct overlap or redundant explanations.

After validating the measurement model, the study proceeded to the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis phase. SEM, which integrates the functions of path and factor analyses, can simultaneously handle multiple causal paths and measurement errors, making it suitable for examining the complex relationships among multiple variables in this study. By leveraging SEM, the direct and indirect effect pathways among Caring Leadership, Organizational Commitment, Trustworthiness, Team Psychological Capital, Employee Performance, and Well-Being can be comprehensively unveiled, and the interaction mechanisms among these variables can be identified.

Through path analysis, the mediating effects were examined to clarify the roles of Organizational Commitment, Trustworthiness, and Team Psychological Capital among the variables. Bootstrapping techniques were employed to estimate confidence intervals for the analysis of mediating effects, ensuring statistical significance and stability of the path relationships. The data analysis process progressed from superficial to profound, with each step interconnected, thereby ensuring the scientific of the measurement instruments and providing robust empirical support for the validation of the theoretical model.

3.3 Qualitative Research

The qualitative research of this study explored key information's perspectives and recommendations on relevant themes through in-depth interviews discussions, thereby complementing and validating the quantitative research. The qualitative research devised a semi-structured interview framework to ensure the flexibility and pertinence of the interviews while guiding experts to discuss key issues such as caring leadership, organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, and well-being. The research team prioritized the authenticity and objectivity of the data, ensuring that the viewpoints of each respondent were fully articulated. Furthermore, the analysis results from NVivo were compared and integrated with the statistical analysis results of the quantitative research, providing multi-dimensional interpretations and in-depth insights for the study. The findings from the qualitative data analysis enriched the research conclusions and offered a crucial basis for refining the theoretical framework.

3.3.1 Interview Design

Special attention was given to leadership practices, teacher support strategies, communication approaches, and organizational climate construction adopted by principals. The interview instrument crafted for this study revolves around seven core variables: caring leadership, organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, and well-being. The interview outline boasts a scientific structure, encompassing multi-dimensional questions such as background guidance, descriptions of specific behaviors, and inquiries into emotional experiences. It aims to gain an in-depth understanding of kindergarten teachers' and management's perceptions, attitudes, and actual feelings toward each variable.

Through the design of open-ended questions, the interviews can amass a wealth of qualitative data, unveiling the intrinsic mechanisms and dynamic interactions among the variables. This facilitates the capture of details and complexities that quantitative data may fail to encompass.

The primary functions of the interview tool are as follows: firstly, to validate and refine the connotations and dimensions of each variable identified in the questionnaire survey, ensuring a high degree of congruence between the theoretical framework and the actual context; secondly, to explore the underlying causes and processes behind the causal relationships among variables, providing qualitative support for the structural equation model; thirdly, to uncover unforeseen new factors and phenomena, thereby enriching theoretical construction and practical application guidance; fourthly, to offer a basis for subsequent questionnaire revision and model refinement, enhancing the reliability and validity of the study.

Interviews and quantitative research complement each other: quantitative questionnaires validate hypothesized relationships through large-sample statistical analysis, revealing the significance and path strengths of variables; while qualitative interviews provide explanations for quantitative results through in-depth case analyses, augmenting the interpretability and persuasiveness of the study. The integration of the two approaches aids in a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of organizational behavior and performance enhancement in kindergartens, fostering innovative development in both theory and practice.

3.3.2 Sample

In the qualitative phase of this study, to gain an in-depth understanding of the influence mechanism of caring leadership on organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, and well-being, the research team employed purposive sampling and selected eight key informants from various types of kindergartens in Weifang City as interviewees. The sample design took full account of the diversity in job positions, organizational attributes, public-private backgrounds, and work experiences, with the aim of obtaining more comprehensive and profound perspectives during data collection.

The sample included two principals with over 10 years of experience. They were able to elucidate, from macro-level perspectives such as strategic management, organizational culture construction, and excellence goal-setting, the profound impact of leadership behaviors on organizational operations and teacher development. Two principals explored how caring leadership influenced the formation of team psychological capital and organizational commitment from the angles of teaching management and teacher support systems. Two backbone teachers with more than 8 years of teaching experience shared the actual experiences of front-line teaching staff, particularly the trust and emotional support they perceived in daily interactions and their effects on performance and well-being. Two supportive staff members from logistics and administrative positions provided authentic feedback on leadership styles, organizational atmosphere, and a sense of belonging from teachers outside the teaching domain.

- Two kindergarten principals: One was from a municipal model public kindergarten, and the other was from a high-quality private kindergarten. Both had over 10 years of kindergarten management experience and could elaborate on the practice of caring leadership, the construction of organizational culture.

- Two teaching supervisors explored how caring leadership influenced the formation of team psychological capital and organizational commitment from the perspectives of teaching management and teacher support systems.

- Two backbone teachers (with over 8 years of teaching experience): They had long-term participation in front-line teaching and in-house team collaboration, were familiar with the actual influence of intra-team interactions and leader behaviors on teacher well-being and performance, and possessed strong expressive abilities and reflective awareness.

- Two supportive staff: They understood the views of "non-teaching" teachers in the organization on leadership styles, trust relationships, and organizational identification, and could supplement unique perspectives from marginal roles, enhancing the diversity of interview data.

These key informant samples covered public-private institutions, management levels, job responsibilities, and teaching experience distributions. They could provide multi-angle and multi-level empirical explanations for the seven major variables involved in the study (caring leadership, organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, well-being), contributing to the construction of a more practical and in-depth qualitative analysis framework.

3.3.3 Research Instrument

The interview outline designed for this study revolves around seven core variables: caring leadership, organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, and well-being, it features a scientific structure, encompassing multi-dimensional questions such as background guidance, descriptions of specific behaviors, and emotional experiences. It aims to gain an in-depth understanding of kindergarten teachers' and management's perceptions, attitudes, and actual feelings toward each variable.

Through the design of open-ended questions, the interviews can collect abundant qualitative data, unveiling the intrinsic mechanisms and dynamic interactions among the variables. This helps to capture the details and complexities that quantitative data may fail to detect. The primary functions of the interview tool include: firstly, validating and refining the connotations and dimensions of each variable in the questionnaire survey to ensure a high degree of alignment between the theoretical framework and the actual context; secondly, exploring the underlying causes and processes behind the causal relationships among variables, providing qualitative support for the structural equation model; thirdly, discovering unforeseen new factors and phenomena to enrich theoretical construction and practical application guidance; fourthly, offering a basis for subsequent questionnaire revision and model refinement to enhance the reliability and validity of the study.

Interviews and quantitative research complement each other: quantitative questionnaires validate hypothesized relationships through large-sample statistics, revealing the significance and path strengths of variables; while qualitative interviews provide explanations for quantitative results through in-depth case analyses, enhancing the interpretability and persuasiveness of the study. The combination of the two facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of organizational behavior and performance improvement in kindergartens, promoting innovative development in theory and practice.

3.3.4 Qualitative Data Collection

The data collection process for interviews adhered to a scientifically rigorous procedure to ensure the authenticity and validity of the data. By the research design, eight representative interviewees were selected, including principals, teaching supervisors, backbone teachers, and supportive staff from public and private kindergartens, guaranteeing the diversity and comprehensiveness of information sources.

Before the interviews, the research team formulated a detailed interview outline that encompassed core variables such as caring leadership, organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, and well-being ensuring the pertinence and depth of the interview content.

The researchers employed a semi-structured interview approach, conducting in-depth face-to-face exchanges with the interviewees. Informed consent was obtained from each respondent in advance to ensure their voluntary participation and the protection of their privacy. All interview contents were recorded throughout the process and subsequently transcribed and organized to ensure the integrity and accuracy of the data. The duration of each interview was typically between 45 and 60 minutes, which not only facilitated sufficient information collection but also avoided respondent fatigue.

To enhance data quality, the research team focused on creating an open and trusting atmosphere during the interviews, encouraging respondents to share their genuine thoughts

and experiences. After the interviews, the research team conducted preliminary content verification and addressed incomplete or ambiguous information through follow-up questions. All collected interview data were subjected to coding and thematic analysis, providing a solid foundation for the subsequent triangulation between qualitative and quantitative data, thereby deepening the understanding of the relationships among the various variables.

3.3.5 Content Analysis

Content analysis is a systematic method used to identify meaningful information and patterns from large amounts of textual data. The key steps are as follows

The research team conducted verbatim transcriptions of the interview recordings to ensure that the written materials comprehensively and accurately reflected the original expressions of the respondents. Upon completion of transcription, the researchers engaged in an initial reading of the textual materials to familiarize themselves with the overall content and to develop a holistic perception of the data. The research team utilized open coding techniques to annotate and categorize significant statements, keywords, or passages within the text and identify concepts and phenomena relevant to the research theme. For instance, regarding core variables such as caring leadership, organizational commitment, and trustworthiness, corresponding expressions and viewpoints were extracted.

The research team then consolidated similar or related initial codes to form higher-level categories or themes, a step commonly referred to as axial coding. By comparing and analyzing the viewpoints of different interviewees, the relationships among themes were clarified, enhancing the understanding of the interactions between the variables.

To guarantee the scientific and objectivity of the analysis, the research team adopted double coding or team discussions to minimize subjective biases and ensure the consistency and reliability of the coding results. The interview data were contrasted with the quantitative questionnaire data to enhance the credibility of the research conclusions. Based on the inductively derived themes, the research team compiled a content analysis report elaborating on the core viewpoints, typical statements, and interrelationships of each theme, thereby forming a profound interpretation of the research questions. This process unveiled the respondents' perceptions and experiences of variables such as caring leadership provided rich supplementation and validation for the quantitative data results.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH RESULTS

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach to explore the relationships among caring leadership for employee performance and well-being in Weifang, China. The research is divided into two parts: quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative Method: A questionnaire was developed based on multiple classical scales, covering variables: caring leadership, organizational commitment, team psychological capita, trustworthiness, employee performance, well-being. Statistical analysis was conducted to construct a multilevel, structurally sound theoretical model, empirically testing the pathways and mediating mechanisms among these variables, providing theoretical support and measurement tools for kindergarten caring leadership.

Qualitative Method: In-depth expert interviews were conducted to gather insights and suggestions, and the data were analyzed using Nvivo14 to provide a more comprehensive interpretation of the findings.

4.1 Demographic Description of Questionnaire Respondents

The gender distribution is well balanced, with 334 males (49.3%) and 344 females (50.7%). In terms of age, the respondents are evenly distributed across different age groups, including below 25 years old (24.9%), 25–30 years old (23.2%), 31–40 years old (26.4%), and above 40 years old (25.5%), indicating good coverage of early-career, mid-career, and senior teachers. Regarding educational background, respondents with a bachelor's degree (26.4%), master's degree (24.0%), doctoral degree (25.5%), and other qualifications (24.0%) are proportionately represented, reflecting diversity in academic attainment. The distribution of professional titles is also relatively even, with teaching assistants (23.2%), lecturers (26.4%), associate professors (24.6%), and professors (25.8%), suggesting participation from teachers at different career stages. With respect to teaching experience, 26.3% of the respondents have less than three years of experience, 27.1% have three to five years, 25.5% have six to eight years, and 21.1% have more than eight years of experience. The description is showed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Demographic Description of Participants

Variable	Option	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	334	49.3
	Female	344	50.7
Age	Below 25 Years' Old	169	24.9
	25-30 Years' Old	157	23.2
	31-40 Years' Old	179	26.4
	Above 40years Old	173	25.5
	Bachelor's Degree	179	26.4

Variable	Option	Frequency	Percent
Highest Education Level	Master's Degree	163	24.0
	Doctoral Degree (Ph.D.)	173	25.5
	Other	163	24.0
Professional Title	Teaching Assistant	157	23.2
	Lecturer	179	26.4
	Associate Professor	167	24.6
	Professor	175	25.8
Years of Teaching Experience	Less Than 3 Years	178	26.3
	3-5 Years	184	27.1
	6-8 Years	173	25.5
	More Than 8 Years	143	21.1
Total		678	100.0

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Variables

The mean of all items of caring leadership ranges from 2.86 to 3.12, indicating a moderate to relatively high level of perceived caring leadership among the respondents. The standard deviations, which vary between 1.38 and 1.45, suggest an acceptable degree of variability in participants' responses, reflecting individual differences in perceptions of caring leadership behaviors. With respect to distributional characteristics, the skewness values for all items fall within a narrow range (-0.09 to 0.13), indicating that the data are approximately symmetrically distributed and do not exhibit serious skewness. Similarly, the kurtosis values are all negative and range from -1.19 to-1.36, suggesting a relatively flat distribution but remaining within acceptable thresholds for normality. The caring leadership items demonstrate good distributional properties and satisfy the assumptions of normality required for subsequent correlation analysis and structural equation modeling, as showed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Distribution of Caring Leadership Measurement

Descriptive Statistics				
Item	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**
BG1	2.98	1.38	0.03	-1.24
BG2	2.93	1.39	0.13	-1.22
BG3	3.07	1.43	-0.05	-1.32
BG4	3.00	1.41	0.01	-1.29
BG5	2.98	1.38	0.04	-1.19
AU1	2.86	1.41	0.08	-1.29
AU2	3.01	1.44	0.01	-1.33
AU3	3.02	1.43	-0.02	-1.32
AU4	3.02	1.39	-0.02	-1.25
PSA1	3.09	1.39	-0.09	-1.24
PSA2	2.99	1.44	0.01	-1.34
PSA3	2.92	1.45	0.07	-1.36
PSA4	2.95	1.42	0.07	-1.30

Descriptive Statistics				
Item	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**
MSI1	3.01	1.40	-0.01	-1.28
MSI2	3.03	1.38	0.02	-1.24
MSI3	2.99	1.41	0.00	-1.27
CA1	2.91	1.40	0.10	-1.25
CA2	3.12	1.42	-0.08	-1.33
CA3	3.07	1.41	-0.04	-1.29
CA4	3.04	1.45	-0.03	-1.36
CA5	2.96	1.39	0.03	-1.24
CA6	2.96	1.42	0.04	-1.30
CA7	2.93	1.40	0.08	-1.28
CA8	2.97	1.42	0.02	-1.30
CA9	2.97	1.39	0.02	-1.29

Note: BG: Being Good to Others; MSI: Maintaining the Shared Interest; AU: Appreciate Uniqueness; PSA: Promoting Self-Actualization; CA: Charismatic Appeal.

The mean scores of all items of organizational commitment range from 2.91 to 3.09, indicating a moderate level of organizational commitment among the respondents across the three dimensions. The standard deviations, which vary from 1.38 to 1.46, suggest an acceptable spread of responses and reflect individual differences in teachers' commitment perceptions. In terms of data distribution, the skewness values for all items fall within a narrow range (-0.11 to 0.09), indicating approximate symmetry and the absence of substantial skewness. The kurtosis values are consistently negative, ranging from -1.22 to -1.37, suggesting relatively flat but acceptable distributions, as showed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Distribution of Organizational Commitment

Descriptive Statistics				
Items	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**
AC1	2.99	1.41	0.04	-1.31
AC2	2.97	1.39	0.03	-1.27
AC3	2.98	1.46	0.04	-1.37
AC4	2.95	1.43	0.01	-1.35
AC5	2.94	1.40	0.09	-1.25
AC6	3.00	1.40	-0.03	-1.25
AC7	2.91	1.41	0.07	-1.30
AC8	2.95	1.38	0.04	-1.25
CC1	3.03	1.41	-0.04	-1.27
CC2	3.07	1.41	-0.06	-1.30
CC3	2.98	1.44	0.06	-1.32
CC4	3.03	1.39	-0.01	-1.25
CC5	3.09	1.42	-0.08	-1.29

Descriptive Statistics				
Items	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**
CC6	3.06	1.39	-0.11	-1.22
CC7	3.00	1.42	0.02	-1.30
CC8	3.06	1.39	-0.04	-1.24
NC1	3.07	1.42	-0.09	-1.28
NC2	2.98	1.43	-0.02	-1.31
NC3	3.00	1.42	0.01	-1.31
NC4	3.02	1.41	-0.04	-1.28
NC5	2.95	1.38	-0.01	-1.24
NC6	3.09	1.38	-0.11	-1.22
NC7	3.04	1.42	0.00	-1.35

Note: AC: Affective Commitment; CC: Continuance Commitment; NC: Normative Commitment

The mean of the items of trustworthiness ranges from 2.91 to 3.11, indicating a moderate level of perceived trustworthiness among respondents. The standard deviations, varying between 1.38 and 1.45, suggest a reasonable dispersion of responses and reflect individual differences in perceptions of trust-related attributes. Regarding distributional characteristics, all skewness values fall within a narrow range (-0.11 to 0.08), indicating approximate symmetry and the absence of serious skewness. The kurtosis values are consistently negative, ranging from -1.24 to -1.35, suggesting relatively flat but acceptable distributions, as showed in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Distribution of Trustworthiness

Descriptive Statistics				
Items	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**
AB1	3.05	1.38	-0.03	-1.24
AB2	2.95	1.42	0.03	-1.33
AB3	3.00	1.45	-0.03	-1.35
AB4	3.11	1.40	-0.07	-1.28
AB5	2.95	1.39	0.07	-1.25
AB6	2.97	1.43	0.02	-1.31
BE1	3.01	1.39	0.01	-1.26
BE2	3.01	1.42	-0.01	-1.31
BE3	3.01	1.42	-0.03	-1.29
BE4	2.99	1.42	0.02	-1.30
BE5	3.09	1.41	-0.11	-1.28
IN1	3.03	1.41	-0.03	-1.30
IN2	2.91	1.42	0.08	-1.33
IN3	2.99	1.40	-0.01	-1.29
IN4	3.03	1.42	-0.04	-1.30
IN5	3.09	1.40	-0.11	-1.28

Descriptive Statistics				
Items	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**
IN6	2.99	1.40	0.01	-1.28

Note: AB: Ability; BE: Benevolence; IN: Integrity

The mean of all items of team psychological capital ranges from 2.93 to 3.11, indicating a moderate to relatively positive level of team psychological capital perceived by the respondents. The standard deviations, which vary between 1.39 and 1.45, reflect an acceptable degree of variability in responses, suggesting individual differences in team-related psychological perceptions. In terms of distributional properties, the skewness values for all items fall within a narrow range (-0.06 to 0.06), indicating approximate symmetry and no serious skewness. The kurtosis values are all negative, ranging from -1.25 to -1.35, suggesting relatively flat but acceptable distributions. Overall, these results indicate that the team psychological capital items demonstrate satisfactory normality and are suitable for subsequent correlation analysis and structural equation modeling, as showed in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Distribution of Team Psychological Capital

Descriptive Statistics				
Items	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**
TCO1	3.11	1.39	-0.06	-1.25
TCO2	3.08	1.42	-0.05	-1.31
TCO3	2.95	1.45	0.03	-1.35
THO1	3.02	1.42	-0.02	-1.31
THO2	2.93	1.40	0.06	-1.27
THO3	2.96	1.41	0.00	-1.29
THO4	3.04	1.41	-0.04	-1.30
TRE1	2.97	1.41	0.02	-1.27
TRE2	2.98	1.42	0.01	-1.31
TRE3	3.05	1.42	-0.05	-1.31
TOP1	2.96	1.43	0.02	-1.32
TOP2	3.06	1.40	-0.04	-1.27

Note: TCO: Team Confidence; THO: Team Hope; TRE: Team Resilience; TOP: Team Optimism

The mean of all items of employee performance ranges from 2.90 to 3.11, indicating a moderate level of employee performance as perceived by the respondents across different performance dimensions. The standard deviations, varying between 1.38 and 1.43, suggest an acceptable dispersion of responses and reflect individual differences in performance perceptions. Regarding distributional characteristics, all skewness values fall within a narrow range (-0.10 to 0.10), indicating approximate symmetry and no serious skewness. The

kurtosis values are consistently negative, ranging from -1.22 to -1.33, suggesting relatively flat but acceptable distributions, as showed in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Distribution of Employee Performance

Descriptive Statistics				
Items	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**
TPE1	3.05	1.42	-0.08	-1.31
TPE2	3.06	1.42	-0.06	-1.29
TPE3	2.98	1.40	-0.02	-1.26
TPE4	3.08	1.38	-0.07	-1.22
RPE1	2.99	1.42	0.00	-1.31
RPE2	3.11	1.41	-0.10	-1.27
RPE3	3.02	1.43	-0.03	-1.33
RPE4	3.05	1.40	-0.07	-1.27
RPE5	2.96	1.41	0.00	-1.30
LPE1	2.90	1.40	0.10	-1.26
LPE2	3.04	1.40	-0.04	-1.27
LPE3	3.05	1.40	-0.04	-1.29

Note: TPE: Task Performance; RPE: Relational Performance; LPE: Learning Performance

The mean of all items of well-being ranges from 2.91 to 3.12, indicating a moderate level of well-being perceived by the respondents across different facets. The standard deviations, which vary between 1.40 and 1.46, suggest an acceptable level of response variability and reflect individual differences in well-being perceptions. In terms of distributional characteristics, the skewness values for all items fall within a narrow range (-0.14 to 0.10), indicating approximate symmetry without serious skewness. The kurtosis values are consistently negative, ranging from -1.25 to -1.38, suggesting relatively flat but acceptable distributions, as showed in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Distribution of Well-Being

Descriptive Statistics				
Item	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**
ACH1	2.91	1.45	0.10	-1.34
ACH2	3.03	1.43	-0.01	-1.31
ACH3	2.98	1.42	0.05	-1.29
ACH4	3.00	1.40	0.00	-1.30
JRE1	3.01	1.40	-0.01	-1.27
JRE2	3.03	1.46	-0.03	-1.38
JRE3	3.04	1.43	-0.07	-1.33
JRE4	2.92	1.43	0.07	-1.33

Descriptive Statistics				
Item	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**
JAT1	3.12	1.43	-0.14	-1.30
JAT2	2.99	1.40	0.00	-1.28
JAT3	3.08	1.44	-0.04	-1.34
JAT4	2.91	1.41	0.10	-1.27
ESU1	3.02	1.40	-0.01	-1.28
ESU2	2.99	1.41	-0.01	-1.28
ESU3	3.03	1.43	0.00	-1.32
ESU4	2.92	1.40	0.10	-1.25

Note: ACH: Achievements; JRE: Job Recognition; JAT: Job Attraction; ESU: Emotional Support

4.3 Discriminatory Power, Reliability Analysis and Validity Analysis

The research questionnaire collected 678 valid questionnaires. The questionnaire data were subjected to reliability test and validity test. When the reliability and validity tests passed the requirements, structural equation modeling analysis was performed.

4.3.1 Reliability

The corrected item–total correlation values for all items of caring leadership range from 0.681 to 0.770, exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.40, which indicates that each item has a strong correlation with the overall construct and contributes meaningfully to the measurement of caring leadership. At the dimensional level, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for Being Good to Others (BG), Appreciate Uniqueness (AU), Promoting Self-Actualization (PSA), Maintaining the Shared Interest (MSI), and Charismatic Appeal (CA) are 0.891, 0.861, 0.870, and 0.831, and 0.935, respectively, all of which exceed the recommended criterion of 0.70, demonstrating strong internal consistency within each dimension, as showed in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Reliability of Caring Leadership Scale

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
BG1	0.758	0.863	0.891
BG2	0.736	0.867	
BG3	0.727	0.869	
BG4	0.724	0.870	
BG5	0.727	0.870	
AU1	0.709	0.823	0.861
AU2	0.707	0.824	

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
AU3	0.717	0.820	
AU4	0.699	0.827	
PSA1	0.714	0.838	0.870
PSA2	0.710	0.839	
PSA3	0.728	0.832	
PSA4	0.741	0.827	
MSI1	0.681	0.773	0.831
MSI2	0.695	0.760	
MSI3	0.692	0.763	
CA1	0.763	0.927	0.935
CA2	0.755	0.927	
CA3	0.766	0.927	
CA4	0.737	0.928	
CA5	0.750	0.928	
CA6	0.741	0.928	
CA7	0.745	0.928	
CA8	0.769	0.927	
CA9	0.770	0.927	

The corrected item–total correlation coefficients for all items of organizational commitment range from 0.720 to 0.766, exceeding the recommended minimum threshold of 0.40, which indicates that each item is strongly correlated with the overall construct and contributes effectively to the measurement of organizational commitment. At the dimensional level, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for affective commitment (AC), continuance commitment (CC), and normative commitment (NC) are 0.927, 0.924, and 0.917, respectively, all of which are well above the commonly accepted criterion of 0.70, demonstrating strong internal consistency within each dimension, as showed in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Reliability of Organizational Commitment Scale

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
AC1	0.754	0.917	0.927
AC2	0.762	0.916	
AC3	0.753	0.917	

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
AC4	0.723	0.919	
AC5	0.751	0.917	
AC6	0.759	0.917	
AC7	0.746	0.918	
AC8	0.751	0.917	
CC1	0.742	0.914	
CC2	0.748	0.914	
CC3	0.751	0.914	
CC4	0.736	0.915	0.924
CC5	0.750	0.914	
CC6	0.739	0.915	
CC7	0.727	0.916	
CC8	0.752	0.914	
NC1	0.745	0.905	
NC2	0.742	0.905	
NC3	0.732	0.906	
NC4	0.745	0.905	0.917
NC5	0.720	0.907	
NC6	0.765	0.903	
NC7	0.766	0.903	

The corrected item–total correlation values for all items of trustworthiness range from 0.718 to 0.751, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.40, which indicates that each item is strongly associated with the overall construct and contributes meaningfully to the measurement of trustworthiness. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for ability (AB), benevolence (BE), and integrity (IN) are 0.907, 0.893, and 0.902, respectively, all of which exceed the acceptable criterion of 0.70, demonstrating strong internal consistency within each dimension, as showed in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10 Reliability of Trustworthiness Scale

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
AB1	0.731	0.892	0.907
AB2	0.750	0.889	

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
AB3	0.751	0.889	
AB4	0.746	0.890	
AB5	0.739	0.891	
AB6	0.739	0.891	
BE1	0.731	0.871	
BE2	0.747	0.867	
BE3	0.741	0.868	0.893
BE4	0.746	0.867	
BE5	0.719	0.873	
IN1	0.718	0.887	
IN2	0.747	0.882	
IN3	0.744	0.883	0.902
IN4	0.724	0.886	
IN5	0.731	0.885	
IN6	0.728	0.885	

The corrected item–total correlation coefficients for all items of team psychological capital range from 0.668 to 0.715, exceeding the recommended minimum threshold of 0.40, indicating that each item is adequately correlated with the overall construct and contributes meaningfully to the measurement of team psychological capital. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for team confidence (TCO), team hope (THO), team resilience (TRE), and team optimism (TOP) are 0.834, 0.858, 0.826, and 0.801, respectively, all of which exceed the commonly accepted criterion of 0.70, demonstrating good internal consistency within each dimension, as showed in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11 Reliability of Team Psychological Capital Scale

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
TCO1	0.701	0.765	
TCO2	0.693	0.772	0.834
TCO3	0.691	0.774	
THO1	0.715	0.814	
THO2	0.715	0.814	
THO3	0.709	0.817	0.858
THO4	0.671	0.832	

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
TRE1	0.689	0.753	0.826
TRE2	0.682	0.759	
TRE3	0.675	0.766	
TOP1	0.668	0.766	0.801
TOP2	0.668	0.771	

The corrected item–total correlation coefficients for all items of employee performance range from 0.694 to 0.749, which are well above the recommended threshold of 0.40, indicating that each item is strongly correlated with the overall construct and contributes effectively to the measurement of employee performance. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for task performance (TPE) and relational performance (RPE) are 0.862 and 0.893, respectively, both exceeding the commonly accepted criterion of 0.70 and demonstrating good internal consistency within each dimension, as showed in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12 Reliability of Employee Performance Scale

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
TPE1	0.703	0.826	0.862
TPE2	0.716	0.821	
TPE3	0.721	0.818	
TPE4	0.694	0.830	
RPE1	0.740	0.869	0.893
RPE2	0.714	0.875	
RPE3	0.749	0.867	
RPE4	0.743	0.868	
RPE5	0.740	0.869	
RPE1	0.740	0.869	0.893
RPE2	0.714	0.875	
RPE3	0.749	0.867	
RPE4	0.743	0.868	
RPE5	0.740	0.869	

The corrected item–total correlation coefficients for all items of well-being range from 0.692 to 0.736, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.40, which suggests that each item is sufficiently correlated with the overall construct and contributes meaningfully to the measurement of well-being. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for achievements (ACH), job

recognition (JRE), job attraction (JAT), and emotional support (ESU) are 0.869, 0.859, 0.861, and 0.867, respectively, all of which exceed the commonly accepted criterion of 0.70, demonstrating good internal consistency within each dimension, as showed in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13 Reliability of Well-being Scale

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
ACH1	0.726	0.831	0.869
ACH2	0.735	0.828	
ACH3	0.709	0.838	
ACH4	0.717	0.835	
JRE1	0.706	0.820	0.859
JRE2	0.692	0.826	
JRE3	0.710	0.819	
JRE4	0.710	0.819	
JAT1	0.711	0.820	0.861
JAT2	0.700	0.825	
JAT3	0.711	0.821	
JAT4	0.704	0.823	
ESU1	0.717	0.829	0.867
ESU2	0.736	0.822	
ESU3	0.699	0.837	
ESU4	0.715	0.830	

4.3.2 Validity

Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The KMO value is 0.984, which is very close to 1.00 and far exceeds the recommended minimum threshold of 0.60, indicating that the sample size is highly adequate and that the correlations among variables are suitable for factor analysis. In addition, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yields a large and statistically significant chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 61{,}218.322$, $df = 5{,}460$, $p < 0.001$), rejecting the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix. As showed in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14 KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.984
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	61218.322
	df	5460
	Sig.	0.000

The initial eigenvalues indicate that the first factor accounts for 43.09% of the total variance, followed by the second factor explaining 8.06%. Together, the first two factors explain 51.15% of the total variance, suggesting a strong underlying factor structure. After extracting the six factors, the cumulative variance explained reaches 63.68%, which exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 60%, indicating that the extracted factors capture a substantial proportion of the information contained in the original variables. After rotation, the variance is more evenly distributed across the six factors. The rotated solution shows that the six factors explain 16.06%, 14.61%, 10.30%, 9.22%, 6.85%, and 6.65% of the variance, respectively, with a cumulative explained variance of 63.68%. This more balanced distribution suggests that each factor makes a meaningful contribution to explaining the overall variance and enhances the interpretability of the factor structure. As showed in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15 Total Variance Explained

No	**Initial Eigenvalues**			**Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings**		
	Total	**% of Variance**	**Cumulative %**	**Total**	**% of Variance**	**Cumulative %**
1	45.247	43.09%	43.09%	45.247	43.09%	43.09%
2	8.463	8.06%	51.15%	8.463	8.06%	51.15%
3	4.497	4.28%	55.44%	4.497	4.28%	55.44%
4	3.233	3.08%	58.51%	3.233	3.08%	58.51%
5	2.852	2.72%	61.23%	2.852	2.72%	61.23%
6	2.576	2.45%	63.68%	2.576	2.45%	63.68%

Six factors were extracted, and all measurement items loaded strongly on their respective components, with standardized factor loadings generally above 0.60 and no substantial cross-loadings observed. This suggests that each item is closely associated with its intended latent construct and that the factor structure demonstrates good discriminant characteristics. The items measuring caring leadership (BG, AU, PSA, MSI, and CA) exhibit high loadings on Component 1, indicating that these dimensions converge well to represent the caring leadership construct. Items related to organizational commitment, including affective commitment (AC), continuance commitment (CC), and normative commitment (NC), load predominantly on Component 2, supporting the conceptual unity of organizational commitment. Trustworthiness items reflecting ability (AB), benevolence (BE), and integrity (IN) load strongly on Component 3, demonstrating a coherent trustworthiness factor. The common variance values for all items are above 0.60, indicating that a substantial proportion of each item's variance is explained by the extracted factors, as showed in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16 Rotated Component Matrix

Item	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
BG1	0.756					
BG2	0.743					
BG3	0.750					
BG4	0.735					
BG5	0.727					
AU1	0.716					
AU2	0.747					
AU3	0.748					
AU4	0.740					
PSA1	0.751					
PSA2	0.744					
PSA3	0.745					
PSA4	0.748					
MSI1	0.740					
MSI2	0.751					
MSI3	0.728					
CA1	0.738					
CA2	0.750					
CA3	0.754					
CA4	0.728					
CA5	0.742					
CA6	0.730					
CA7	0.730					
CA8	0.754					
CA9	0.745					
AC1		0.696				
AC2		0.698				
AC3		0.694				
AC4		0.672				
AC5		0.686				
AC6		0.715				
AC7		0.687				
AC8		0.702				
CC1		0.67				
CC2		0.702				
CC3		0.692				
CC4		0.700				
CC5		0.705				
CC6		0.681				
CC7		0.701				
CC8		0.687				

Item	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
NC1		0.681				
NC2		0.701				
NC3		0.679				
NC4		0.706				
NC5		0.686				
NC6		0.726				
NC7		0.701				
AB1			0.644			
AB2			0.650			
AB3			0.657			
AB4			0.681			
AB5			0.628			
AB6			0.662			
BE1			0.658			
BE2			0.659			
BE3			0.691			
BE4			0.678			
BE5			0.659			
IN1			0.660			
IN2			0.679			
IN3			0.669			
IN4			0.671			
IN5			0.649			
IN6			0.653			
TCO1						0.655
TCO2						0.635
TCO3						0.647
THO1						0.667
THO2						0.635
THO3						0.609
THO4						0.609
TRE1						0.618
TRE2						0.625
TRE3						0.624
TOP1						0.636
TOP2						0.669
TPE1					0.625	
TPE2					0.652	
TPE3					0.680	
TPE4					0.606	
RPE1					0.644	
RPE2					0.646	
RPE3					0.674	

Item	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
RPE4					0.627	
RPE5					0.635	
LPE1					0.647	
LPE2					0.623	
LPE3					0.663	
ACH1				0.627		
ACH2				0.628		
ACH3				0.641		
ACH4				0.654		
JRE1				0.660		
JRE2				0.660		
JRE3				0.631		
JRE4				0.630		
JAT1				0.662		
JAT2				0.604		
JAT3				0.669		
JAT4				0.630		
ESU1				0.622		
ESU2				0.650		
ESU3				0.663		
ESU4				0.641		

4.4 Correlation Analysis

Caring leadership (CL) is positively correlated with organizational commitment (OC) ($r = .502$, $p < .01$), trustworthiness (TRU) ($r = .532$, $p < .01$), team psychological capital (TPC) ($r = .536$, $p < .01$), employee performance (EPE) ($r = .517$, $p < .01$), and well-being (WEB) ($r = .532$, $p < .01$). These results indicate that higher levels of perceived caring leadership are associated with stronger organizational commitment, greater trust, enhanced team psychological resources, improved employee performance, and higher well-being.

In addition, organizational commitment shows strong positive correlations with trustworthiness ($r = .660$, $p < .01$), team psychological capital ($r = .662$, $p < .01$), employee performance ($r = .661$, $p < .01$), and well-being ($r = .677$, $p < .01$). Trustworthiness is also strongly correlated with team psychological capital ($r = .676$, $p < .01$), employee performance ($r = .673$, $p < .01$), and well-being ($r = .697$, $p < .01$). Similarly, team psychological capital demonstrates strong positive associations with employee performance ($r = .674$, $p < .01$) and well-being ($r = .684$, $p < .01$), while employee performance is highly correlated with well-being ($r = .690$, $p < .01$). All correlation coefficients are positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level, and none exceed the commonly accepted threshold for multicollinearity concerns, as showed in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17 Results of Correlation Analysis for Each Dimension

	CL	OC	TRU	TPC	EPE	WEB
CL	1					
OC	.502**	1				
TRU	.532**	.660**	1			
TPC	.536**	.662**	.676**	1		
EPE	.517**	.661**	.673**	.674**	1	
WEB	.532**	.677**	.697**	.684**	.690**	1

NOTE: * p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001 CL: Caring Leadership; OC: Organizational Commitment; TRU: Trustworthiness; TPC: Team Psychological Capital; EPE: Employee Performance; WEB: Well-being

4.5 Structural Equation Models and Hypothesis Testing

4.5.1 Direct Effect Verification

The chi-square value (CMIN = 721.232) with 198 degrees of freedom yields a CMIN/DF ratio of 3.643, which is below the recommended threshold of 5.0, suggesting an acceptable level of model fit. The goodness-of-fit index (GFI) reaches 0.906, exceeding the commonly accepted criterion of 0.90, indicating that the model explains a substantial proportion of the observed covariance.

In addition, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is 0.062, which is below the cutoff value of 0.08 and reflects a reasonable approximation of the data. The incremental fit indices further support the adequacy of the model, with IFI = 0.974, NFI = 0.964, TLI = 0.969, and CFI = 0.974, all of which are well above the recommended threshold of 0.90, as showed in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18 Model Fit Intercept (N=678)

Model Fit Indicator	Observed Value
CMIN	721.232
DF	198
CMIN/DF	3.643
GFI	0.906
RMSEA	0.062
IFI	0.974
NFI	0.964
TLI	0.969
CFI	0.974

Caring leadership (CL) has a significant and positive effect on organizational commitment (OC) ($\beta = 0.533$, $p < 0.001$), trustworthiness (TRU) ($\beta = 0.566$, $p < 0.001$), and team psychological capital (TPC) ($\beta = 0.573$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that higher levels of caring leadership are associated with stronger employee commitment, greater trust, and enhanced team psychological resources. In terms of employee performance (EPE), organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.307$, $p < 0.001$), trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.339$, $p < 0.001$), and team psychological capital ($\beta = 0.346$, $p < 0.001$) all exert significant positive effects, suggesting that these three variables play important roles in enhancing teachers' task, relational, and learning performance. Regarding well-being (WEB), organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.228$, $p < 0.001$), trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.275$, $p < 0.001$), team psychological capital ($\beta = 0.224$, $p < 0.001$), and employee performance ($\beta = 0.226$, $p < 0.001$) all show significant positive effects, indicating that both attitudinal and performance-related factors contribute to teachers' overall well-being.

Caring leadership also has a direct but relatively weaker positive effect on well-being ($\beta = 0.102$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that, in addition to its indirect effects through organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, and employee performance, caring leadership can directly enhance employee well-being. as showed in Table 4.19.

Table 4.19 Results of Structural Equation Modeling

Path Relationship			**Estimate**	**S.E.**	**C.R.**	**P**	**Standardized Estimate**
OC	<---	CL	0.524	0.034	15.299	***	0.533
TRU	<---	CL	0.559	0.034	16.392	***	0.566
TPC	<---	CL	0.576	0.037	15.737	***	0.573
EPE	<---	OC	0.286	0.039	7.286	***	0.307
EPE	<---	TRU	0.314	0.040	7.816	***	0.339
EPE	<---	TPC	0.316	0.041	7.793	***	0.346
WEB	<---	OC	0.212	0.038	5.543	***	0.228
WEB	<---	TRU	0.255	0.040	6.371	***	0.275
WEB	<---	TPC	0.204	0.040	5.055	***	0.224
WEB	<---	CL	0.100	0.032	2.237	*	0.102
WEB	<---	EPE	0.226	0.041	5.454	***	0.226

NOTE: * p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

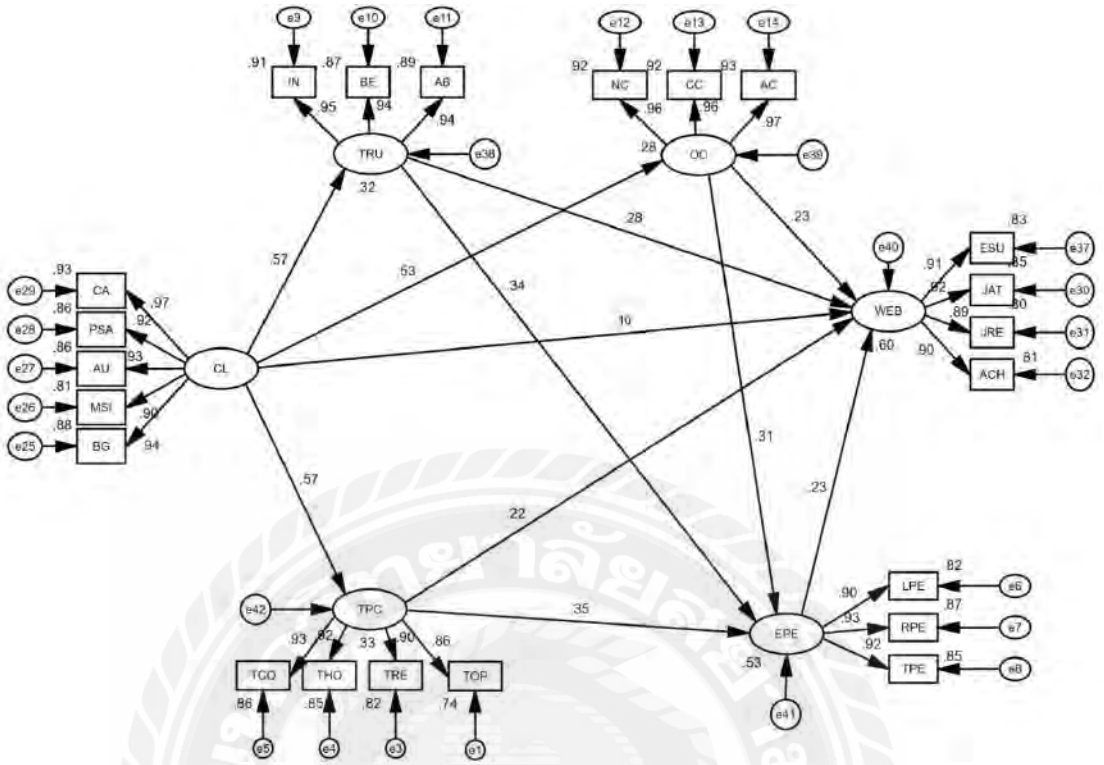


Figure 4.1 Modified Structural Equation Model

4.5.2 Indirect Effect Verification

To examine the chain mediation effect, this study employed PROCESS Macro Model 6 for the analysis. The direct effect of caring leadership (CL) on well-being (WEB) was 0.163, which was positive and statistically significant. Through the indirect effect process, CL influenced WEB via organizational commitment (OC) and employee performance (EPE). The path coefficients were 0.498, 0.253, 0.553, 0.348, and 0.369, all of which were significant ($p < 0.001$). The total effect was 0.531, indicating that the influence of CL on WEB is transmitted through both direct and indirect pathways and that the effect is robust. Moreover, the 95% confidence intervals for all paths did not include zero, confirming the significance and consistency of the effects, as shown in Table 4.20.

Table 4.20 Effects of Organizational Commitment

Effect	Path Relationship	Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Direct Effects	CL⇒WEB	0.163	0.030	5.442	0.000	0.104	0.222
Indirect Effects	CL⇒OC	0.498	0.033	15.100	0.000	0.433	0.563
	CL⇒EPE	0.253	0.033	7.741	0.000	0.189	0.317
	OC⇒EPE	0.553	0.033	16.774	0.000	0.488	0.618
	OC⇒WEB	0.348	0.035	10.058	0.000	0.280	0.415
	EPE⇒WEB	0.369	0.034	10.893	0.000	0.303	0.436

Effect	Path Relationship	Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Total Effects	CL⇒WEB	0.531	0.033	16.348	0.000	0.468	0.595

The results of the indirect effect analysis show that all indirect effects are statistically significant. Specifically, the indirect effect of CL on WEB through OC was 0.173, with a z-value of 5.838 and $p < 0.001$, indicating a significant mediation effect. The indirect effect of CL on WEB through EPE was 0.093, with a z-value of 3.743 and $p < 0.001$, also demonstrating a significant mediation pathway. Furthermore, the chain-mediated effect of CL on WEB through OC and EPE was 0.102, with a z-value of 7.146 and $p < 0.001$, confirming the robustness and significance of the sequential mediation effect, as showed in Table 4.21.

Table 4.21 Indirect Effects of Organizational Commitment

Path Relationship	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	z	p
CL⇒OC⇒WEB	0.173	0.030	0.119	0.237	5.838	0.000
CL⇒EPE⇒WEB	0.093	0.025	0.050	0.151	3.743	0.000
CL⇒OC⇒EPE⇒WEB	0.102	0.014	0.077	0.131	7.146	0.000

Regression analysis further indicated that the total effect of CL on WEB was 0.531, of which the direct effect accounted for 0.280 and the total mediated effect accounted for 0.251. Organizational commitment (OC) played a partial mediating role in the relationship between CL and WEB, as all path coefficients were statistically significant, supporting the conclusion of partial mediation. Using the bootstrap method, the z-value for the mediating effect was 9.276 with a p-value of 0.000, which is well below the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the mediation effect is statistically significant. In addition, the 95% bootstrap confidence interval for the mediating effect ranged from 0.201 to 0.306 and did not include zero, further confirming the significance of the mediation effect.

In the regression analysis, the total effect of CL on WEB (c) was 0.531, representing the overall influence of CL on WEB, including both direct and indirect effects through mediators. The effect of CL on OC (path a) was 0.486, indicating a significant positive influence of CL on organizational commitment. Subsequently, the effect of OC on WEB (path b) was 0.517, demonstrating a significant positive effect of organizational commitment on well-being. The mediating effect (ab) was obtained by multiplying these two coefficients ($0.486 \times 0.517 = 0.251$), indicating that CL exerts an indirect effect on WEB through OC. The standard error of the mediating effect (Boot SE) was 0.027, as showed in Table 4.22.

Table 4.22 Indirect Effects of Organizational Commitment

Path Relationship	Total Effects	a	b	a*b Indirect Effects	a*b (Boot SE)	a*b (z)	a*b (p)	a*b (95% Boot CI)	c' Direct Effects
CL=>OC=>WEB	0.531**	0.486**	0.517**	0.251	0.027	9.276	0.000	0.201 ~ 0.306	0.280**

The direct effect of caring leadership (CL) on well-being (WEB) was 0.145, which was positive and statistically significant. Through the indirect effect process, CL exerted a significant influence on WEB via trustworthiness (TRU) and employee performance (EPE). Specifically, the effect of CL on TRU was 0.534, the effect of TRU on WEB was 0.374, and the effect of EPE on WEB was 0.354, all of which were significant at the 0.001 level. Overall, the total effect of CL on WEB was 0.531, indicating that CL has a substantial impact on WEB through multiple pathways. All path coefficients were statistically significant, confirming the robustness of the model, as shown in Table 4.23.

Table 4.23 Effects of Trustworthiness

Effect	Path Relationship	Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Direct Effects	CL⇒WEB	0.145	0.030	4.806	0.000	0.086	0.204
Indirect Effects	CL⇒TRU	0.534	0.033	16.327	0.000	0.470	0.598
	CL⇒EPE	0.227	0.033	6.833	0.000	0.162	0.292
	TRU⇒EPE	0.565	0.033	17.085	0.000	0.500	0.629
	TRU⇒WEB	0.374	0.035	10.796	0.000	0.306	0.442
	EPE⇒WEB	0.354	0.034	10.488	0.000	0.288	0.420
Total Effects	CL⇒WEB	0.531	0.033	16.348	0.000	0.468	0.595

The results of the indirect effect analysis indicate that all indirect effects were statistically significant. The indirect effect of CL on WEB through TRU was 0.200, with a z-value of 6.292 ($p < 0.001$), demonstrating a significant mediation effect. The indirect effect of CL on WEB through EPE was 0.080, with a z-value of 3.504 ($p < 0.001$), which also indicates a significant mediation pathway. In addition, the chain-mediated effect of CL on WEB through TRU and EPE was 0.107, with a z-value of 7.102 ($p < 0.001$), further confirming the robustness and significance of the sequential mediation effect, as shown in Table 4.24.

Table 4.24 Indirect Effects Process of Trustworthiness

Path Relationship	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	z	p
CL⇒TRU⇒WEB	0.200	0.032	0.142	0.267	6.292	0.000
CL⇒EPE⇒WEB	0.080	0.023	0.040	0.128	3.504	0.000
CL⇒TRU⇒EPE⇒WEB	0.107	0.015	0.081	0.138	7.102	0.000

The mediation analysis further revealed that CL exerted a significant partial mediating effect on WEB through TRU. The total effect was 0.531, of which the indirect effect accounted for 0.307 and the direct effect accounted for 0.225. The statistical significance of all path coefficients (a, b, and c′), as well as the mediation effect, was verified using bootstrap confidence intervals, demonstrating the robustness of the mediation results. Therefore, TRU played a partial mediating role in the relationship between CL and WEB, supporting the conclusion of partial mediation. The 95% bootstrap confidence interval (Boot

CI) for the mediation effect ranged from 0.247 to 0.370 and did not include zero, confirming the significance of the mediation effect. The direct effect of CL on WEB (path c′) was 0.225, indicating that CL continued to have a significant direct influence on WEB after accounting for the mediating role of TRU.

In the regression analysis, the total effect of CL on WEB was 0.531, representing the overall influence of CL on WEB, including both direct effects and indirect effects through the mediator TRU. The effect of CL on TRU (path a) was 0.534, indicating a significant positive influence of CL on TRU. Subsequently, the effect of TRU on WEB (path b) was 0.574, demonstrating a significant positive impact of TRU on WEB. The mediating effect (ab) was calculated by multiplying these two coefficients (0.534 × 0.574 = 0.307), indicating a significant indirect effect of CL on WEB through TRU. The standard error of the mediation effect (Boot SE) was 0.031, and the bootstrap test yielded a z-value of 10.015 with a p-value of 0.000, which is well below the 0.05 threshold, confirming the statistical significance of the mediation effect, as shown in Table 4.25.

Table 4.25 Indirect Effects of Trustworthiness

Path Relationship	**Total Effects**	**a**	**b**	**a*b Indirect Effects**	**a*b (Boot SE)**	**a*b (z)**	**a*b (p)**	**a*b (95% Boot CI)**	**c' Direct Effects**
CL=>TRU=>WEB	0.531**	0.534**	0.574**	0.307	0.031	10.015	0.000	0.247 ~ 0.370	0.225**

The effect process analysis further showed that the direct effect of CL on WEB was 0.149, which was positive and statistically significant. Through the indirect effect process, CL significantly influenced WEB via team psychological capital (TPC) and EPE. Specifically, the effect of CL on TPC was 0.540, the effect of CL on EPE was 0.223, the effect of TPC on EPE was 0.565, the effect of TPC on WEB was 0.346, and the effect of EPE on WEB was 0.369. All path coefficients were statistically significant at the 0.001 level. The total effect of CL on WEB was 0.531, indicating that CL influenced WEB through multiple pathways, and all effects were statistically significant, thereby confirming the robustness of the model, as shown in Table 4.26.

Table 4.26 Effects of Team Psychological Capital

Effect	**Path Relationship**	**Effect**	**SE**	**t**	**p**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**
Direct Effects	CL⇒WEB	0.149	0.031	4.895	0.000	0.090	0.209
Indirect Effects	CL⇒TPC	0.540	0.033	16.524	0.000	0.476	0.604
	CL⇒EPE	0.223	0.033	6.706	0.000	0.158	0.289
	TPC⇒EPE	0.565	0.033	17.062	0.000	0.500	0.630
	TPC⇒WEB	0.346	0.035	9.851	0.000	0.277	0.415
	EPE⇒WEB	0.369	0.034	10.815	0.000	0.302	0.436
Total Effects	CL⇒WEB	0.531	0.033	16.348	0.000	0.468	0.595

The indirect effect analysis results demonstrate that all indirect effects were statistically significant. The indirect effect of CL on WEB through TPC was 0.187, with a z-value of 5.656 ($p < 0.001$), indicating a significant mediation effect. The indirect effect of CL on WEB through EPE was 0.083, with a z-value of 3.295 ($p = 0.001$), also indicating a significant mediation pathway. Moreover, the chain-mediated effect of CL on WEB through TPC and EPE was 0.113, with a z-value of 7.323 ($p < 0.001$), confirming the robustness and significance of the sequential mediation effect, as shown in Table 4.27.

Table 4.27 Indirect Effects Process of Team Psychological Capital

Path Relationship	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	z	p
CL⇒TPC⇒WEB	0.187	0.033	0.127	0.255	5.656	0.000
CL⇒EPE⇒WEB	0.083	0.025	0.040	0.142	3.295	0.001
CL⇒TPC⇒EPE⇒WEB	0.113	0.015	0.086	0.147	7.323	0.000

The mediation analysis further indicated that CL exerted a significant partial mediating effect on WEB through TPC. The total effect was 0.531, of which the indirect effect accounted for 0.299 and the direct effect accounted for 0.232. The statistical significance of all path coefficients (a, b, and c′) and the mediation effect was verified using bootstrap confidence intervals, demonstrating the robustness of the mediation results. Thus, TPC played a partial mediating role in the relationship between CL and WEB, supporting the conclusion of partial mediation. The bootstrap test yielded a z-value of 9.560 with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a statistically significant mediation effect. The 95% bootstrap confidence interval (Boot CI) ranged from 0.243 to 0.365 and did not include zero, further confirming the significance of the mediation effect. The direct effect of CL on WEB (path c′) was 0.232, indicating that CL continued to exert a significant direct influence on WEB after accounting for the mediating role of TPC.

In the regression analysis, the total effect of CL on WEB was 0.531, representing the overall impact of CL on WEB, including both direct effects and indirect effects through the mediator TPC. The effect of CL on TPC (path a) was 0.540, indicating a significant positive influence of CL on TPC. Subsequently, the effect of TPC on WEB (path b) was 0.555, demonstrating a significant positive influence of TPC on WEB. The mediating effect (ab) was calculated by multiplying these two coefficients ($0.540 \times 0.555 = 0.299$), indicating a significant indirect effect of CL on WEB through TPC. The standard error of the mediation effect (Boot SE) was 0.031, as shown in Table 4.28.

Table 4.28 Indirect Effects of Team Psychological Capital

Path Relationship	Total Effects	a	b	a*b Indirect Effects	a*b (Boot SE)	a*b (z)	a*b (p)	a*b (95% Boot CI)	c' Direct Effects
CL=>TPC=>WEB	0.531**	0.540**	0.555**	0.299	0.031	9.560	0.000	0.243 ~ 0.365	0.232**

Table 4.29 Hypotheses Test Results

Hypothesis	Result
Hypothesis 1: Caring Leadership has a positive impact on Organizational Commitment.	Established
Hypothesis 2: Caring Leadership has a positive impact on Trustworthiness.	Established
Hypothesis 3: Caring Leadership has a positive impact on Team Psychological Capital.	Established
Hypothesis 4: Organizational Commitment has a positive impact on Well-Being.	Established
Hypothesis 5: Organizational Commitment has a positive impact on Employee Performance.	Established
Hypothesis 6: Trustworthiness has a positive impact on Well-Being.	Established
Hypothesis7: Trustworthiness has a positive impact on Employee Performance.	Established
Hypothesis 8: Team Psychological Capital has a positive impact on Well-Being.	Established
Hypothesis 9: Team Psychological Capital has a positive impact on Employee Performance.	Established
Hypothesis 10: Employee Performance has a positive impact on Well-Being.	Established
Hypothesis 11: Caring Leadership has a positive impact on Well-Being.	Established
Hypothesis 12: Organizational Commitment mediates the relationship between Caring Leadership and Well-Being.	Established
Hypothesis 13: Trustworthiness mediates the relationship between Caring Leadership and Well-Being.	Established
Hypothesis 14: Team Psychological Capital mediates the relationship between Caring Leadership and Well-Being.	Established
Hypothesis 15: Employee Performance sequentially mediates the relationship between Caring Leadership and Well-being.	Established

Hypothesis 1, which proposed that caring leadership (CL) has a positive impact on organizational commitment (OC), was supported. The structural path from CL to OC was significant ($\beta = 0.533$, CR = 15.299, $p < 0.001$), indicating that higher levels of caring leadership are associated with stronger organizational commitment among teachers.

Hypothesis 2 stated that caring leadership has a positive impact on trustworthiness (TRU). The results confirmed this hypothesis, with a significant positive path coefficient from CL to TRU ($\beta = 0.566$, CR = 16.392, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that caring leadership effectively enhances teachers' perceptions of trustworthiness.

Hypothesis 3 proposed a positive relationship between caring leadership and team psychological capital (TPC). The findings supported this hypothesis, as CL showed a strong and significant effect on TPC ($\beta = 0.573$, CR = 15.737, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that caring leadership contributes positively to team-level psychological resources.

Hypothesis 4 stated that organizational commitment positively influences well-being (WEB). This hypothesis was established, with OC having a significant positive effect on WEB ($\beta = 0.228$, CR = 5.543, $p < 0.001$), indicating that teachers with stronger organizational commitment tend to experience higher levels of well-being.

Hypothesis 5 proposed that organizational commitment has a positive impact on employee performance (EPE). The empirical results supported this relationship, as OC significantly predicted EPE ($\beta = 0.307$, CR = 7.286, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that committed teachers perform better at work.

Hypothesis 6 stated that trustworthiness positively affects well-being. The results confirmed this hypothesis, with TRU showing a significant positive effect on WEB ($\beta = 0.275$, CR = 6.371, $p < 0.001$), highlighting the importance of trust in enhancing employee well-being.

Hypothesis 7 proposed that trustworthiness positively influences employee performance. This hypothesis was supported by a significant path from TRU to EPE ($\beta = 0.339$, CR = 7.816, $p < 0.001$), indicating that higher levels of perceived trustworthiness lead to improved employee performance.

Hypothesis 8 stated that team psychological capital has a positive impact on well-being. The findings supported this hypothesis, as TPC was significantly related to WEB ($\beta = 0.224$, CR = 5.055, $p < 0.001$), showing that stronger team psychological capital contributes to higher employee well-being.

Hypothesis 9 proposed that team psychological capital positively affects employee performance. This relationship was confirmed, with TPC exerting a significant positive effect on EPE ($\beta = 0.346$, CR = 7.793, $p < 0.001$), indicating that psychologically resourceful teams enhance individual performance.

Hypothesis 10 stated that employee performance positively influences well-being. The results supported this hypothesis, as EPE showed a significant positive effect on WEB ($\beta = 0.226$, CR = 5.454, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that better-performing teachers tend to experience greater well-being.

Hypothesis 11 proposed that caring leadership has a direct positive impact on well-being. This hypothesis was established, with a significant direct path from CL to WEB ($\beta = 0.102$, CR = 2.237, $p < 0.05$), indicating that caring leadership contributes directly to employee well-being beyond indirect pathways.

Hypothesis 12 proposed that organizational commitment mediates the relationship between caring leadership and well-being. The mediation analysis supported this hypothesis, showing a significant indirect effect of CL on WEB through OC (indirect effect = 0.251, z = 9.276, $p < 0.001$), with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval of [0.201, 0.306], which did not include zero. This indicates a significant partial mediating effect.

Hypothesis 13 proposed that trustworthiness mediates the relationship between caring leadership and well-being. The results confirmed this mediation effect, with CL influencing WEB indirectly through TRU (indirect effect = 0.307, z = 10.015, $p < 0.001$), and a 95% bootstrap confidence interval of [0.247, 0.370], supporting the robustness of this partial mediation.

Hypothesis 14 stated that team psychological capital mediates the relationship between caring leadership and well-being. This hypothesis was also supported, as the indirect effect of CL on WEB via TPC was significant (indirect effect = 0.299, z = 9.560, p < 0.001), with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval of [0.243, 0.365], confirming that TPC plays a significant partial mediating role.

Hypothesis 15: The chain-mediated effect of 0.113, with a z-value of 7.323 (p < 0.001), reveals that caring leadership influences teachers' well-being through a sequential mediation process involving both team psychological capital and employee performance. This reinforces the robustness of the mediation pathways, indicating that caring leadership not only directly influences well-being but also indirectly impacts it by enhancing team psychological resources and boosting employee performance.

4.6 Qualitative Data Analysis

4.6.1 Participant Selection

Table 4.30 Interview Participants

ID	Role	Institution	Position	Experience	Representativeness
I1	Principal	Public Kindergarten	Principal	≥10 years	Provides macro-level insights into strategic management, organizational culture, and leadership impact
I2	Principal	High-quality Private Kindergarten	Principal	≥10 years	Offers comparative perspectives on caring leadership practices under private management contexts
I3	Principal Director	Public Kindergarten	Teaching Supervisor	≥8 years	Explains leadership support effects on team development and teaching quality
I4	Principal Director	Private Kindergarten	Teaching Supervisor	≥8 years	Highlights trust-building and coordination under blended management systems
I5	Backbone Teacher	Public Kindergarten	Backbone Teacher	≥8 years	Reflects authentic frontline experiences of leadership care and daily interactions
I6	Backbone Teacher	Private Kindergarten	Backbone Teacher	≥8 years	Demonstrates how organizational support influences engagement and satisfaction

ID	Role	Institution	Position	Experience	Representativeness
I7	Administrative	Public Kindergarten	Supportive Staff	≥5 years	Provides non-teaching staff perspectives on leadership and organizational climate
I8	Administrative	Private Kindergarten	Supportive Staff	≥5 years	Enhances data diversity by incorporating marginal-role viewpoints

A total of eight interview participants were purposively selected to ensure diversity in organizational type, role, and professional experience, thereby enhancing the credibility and richness of the qualitative findings. The sample comprised principals, teaching supervisors, backbone teachers, supportive staff drawn from both public and high-quality private kindergartens. All participants possessed substantial professional experience, ranging from five to over ten years, enabling them to provide informed and reflective insights into leadership practices and organizational dynamics. Specifically, the two principals (I1 and I2) offered macro-level perspectives on strategic management, organizational culture construction, and the overall impact of caring leadership in different governance contexts. The teaching supervisors (I3 and I4), responsible for teaching management and staff development, contributed meson-level insights into how leadership support, trust-building, and coordination mechanisms influence team psychological capital and teaching quality. The backbone teachers (I5 and I6), with extensive frontline teaching experience, provided micro-level accounts of daily leadership interactions, perceived care, organizational support, and their effects on engagement, performance, and well-being. In addition, the administrative support staff (I7 and I8) represented non-teaching roles and offered valuable perspectives on organizational climate, trust relationships, and a sense of belonging, thereby broadening the analytical scope of the study, as shown in Table 4.30.

4.6.2 Analysis of Interview Results

The results of the NVivo 14 qualitative coding analysis based on interviews with eight participants. The interview data were systematically analyzed following grounded theory procedures, including open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The coding outcomes were organized into five dimensions: selective coding, axial coding, open coding, reference code points, and descriptive interpretations. The results reveal that caring leadership serves as the core theme, influencing organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, and well-being through multiple interconnected mechanisms. The frequency of reference code points further indicates the relative salience and explanatory strength of each category within the qualitative data.

Table 4.31 Coding Analysis Results

Selective Coding	Axial Coding	Open Coding	Reference Code Point	Description
Caring Leadership	Emotional Care and Support	Empathy; listening; emotional encouragement	68	Leaders demonstrate genuine concern for teachers' emotional needs, creating a supportive working environment.
	Individualized Consideration	Respect for individuality; flexible management; recognition	54	Caring leadership respects teachers' uniqueness and autonomy, enhancing motivation and psychological safety.
	Professional Development Support	Training opportunities; guidance; career planning	47	Leaders support teachers' professional growth through continuous learning opportunities.
Organizational Commitment	Affective Commitment	Sense of belonging; emotional attachment	59	Teachers develop strong emotional bonds with the organization.
	Continuance Commitment	Willingness to stay; job stability	41	Organizational support increases teachers' intention to remain long term.
	Normative Commitment	Responsibility; loyalty	38	Teachers feel a moral obligation to reciprocate organizational care.
Trustworthiness	Leader Ability	Professional competence; decision-making	52	Teachers trust leaders' abilities to manage effectively.

Selective Coding	Axial Coding	Open Coding	Reference Code Point	Description
	Leader Benevolence	Fairness; ethical behavior	57	Benevolent leadership strengthens trust and reduces power distance.
	Leader Integrity	Consistency; transparency	49	Transparent leadership enhances perceived trustworthiness.
Team Psychological Capital	Team Confidence	Collective efficacy	44	Teams show strong belief in their ability to complete tasks.
	Team Resilience	Adaptability; mutual support	42	Team members jointly overcome setbacks.
Employee Performance	Task Performance	Teaching quality; efficiency	46	Caring leadership indirectly improves teaching effectiveness.
	Relational Performance	Helping colleagues; cooperation	51	Teachers actively contribute to a cooperative climate.
Well-Being	Achievement Satisfaction	Sense of accomplishment	48	Teachers experience higher well-being through perceived achievements.
	Emotional Support	Support from colleagues	53	Emotional support buffers stress and promotes well-being.

Based on the NVivo 14 coding analysis of interviews with eight participants, caring leadership emerged as the core selective coding, influencing organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, and well-being through interconnected pathways. The frequency of reference code points indicates the relative salience of each theme, while expert narratives provide contextual depth and explanatory power.

(1) Caring Leadership

Under the selective coding of Caring Leadership, three aoxial categories were identified: emotional care and support, individualized consideration, and professional development support. Emotional care and support received the highest number of reference code points (68), highlighting its central role in daily leadership practices. Interviewees frequently emphasized leaders' empathy, attentive listening, and emotional encouragement.

"When teachers feel emotionally exhausted, I try to talk with them privately, listen patiently, and reassure them that their feelings are understood. This kind of care makes them feel safe and willing to share difficulties." (I1) Individualized consideration (54 reference points) reflected leaders' respect for teachers' individuality, flexible management approaches, and recognition of personal strengths. A backbone teacher explained: "Our principal does not manage everyone in the same way. She understands our different personalities and family situations, which makes me feel respected and more motivated at work." (I5) Professional development support (47 reference points) further illustrated caring leadership as a long-term investment in teachers growth. One teaching director stated: "Caring leadership is not only about emotions but also about helping teachers see their future. Providing training and career guidance makes them feel valued by the organization." (I3) Emotional care, individualized consideration, and developmental support reflect core dimensions of caring leadership, consistent with Tomlinson et al. (2020).

(2) Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment was manifested through affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Affective commitment showed the strongest presence (59 reference points), indicating teachers' emotional attachment and sense of belonging. As one teacher described: "This kindergarten feels like a family to me. I am emotionally attached to it, not just working here for a salary." (I6) Continuance commitment (41 reference points) reflected teachers' willingness to remain in the organization due to stability and supportive conditions. An administrative staff member remarked: "Because the organization cares about us, I don't want to leave easily, even when other opportunities appear." (I7) Normative commitment (38 reference points) highlighted a moral obligation to reciprocate care. A principal explained: "When teachers receive genuine care, they naturally feel responsible for giving back through dedication and loyalty." (I2) This pattern aligns with evidence that caring leadership strengthens affective, continuance, and normative commitment through perceived support and reciprocity (Chowdhury et al., 2002; Geremias et al., 2022).

(3) Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was constructed through leader ability, benevolence, and integrity. Leader benevolence (57 reference points) was particularly salient, emphasizing fairness and ethical behavior. One interviewee stated: "Our leader always treats people fairly and considers teachers' interests first, which makes us trust her decisions." (I4) Leader ability (52

reference points) and integrity (49 reference points) further reinforced trust. A teacher commented: "I trust my principal because she is professional, consistent, and transparent. Her decisions are usually well explained." (I6) Leader benevolence, ability, and integrity as sources of trust are consistent with prior trustworthiness research (Chowdhury et al., 2023).

(4) Team Psychological Capital

Team psychological capital consisted of team confidence and team resilience. Team confidence (44 reference points) reflected collective efficacy, while team resilience (42 reference points) emphasized adaptability and mutual support. One backbone teacher noted: "Even when we face difficulties, our team believes we can solve problems together. We encourage each other instead of blaming." (I5) Caring leadership has been shown to enhance team confidence and resilience, supporting the present findings (Tigre et al., 2022).

(5) Employee Performance

Employee performance was captured through task performance and relational performance. Relational performance (51 reference points) slightly exceeded task performance (46 reference points), indicating the importance of cooperation and helping behaviors. An interviewee stated "When leadership is caring, teachers are more willing to help colleagues and contribute beyond their formal duties." (I8) This supports the view that caring leadership promotes both relational and task performance through prosocial behaviors (Westover, 2024).

(6) Well-Being

Well-being was reflected in achievement satisfaction and emotional support. Emotional support (53 reference points) played a crucial buffering role against stress. One teacher shared: "When I feel stressed, support from colleagues and leaders makes me feel emotionally balanced and happier at work." (I6) Achievement satisfaction (48 reference points) highlighted the link between perceived accomplishments and well-being: "Seeing children grow and being recognized by leaders gives me a strong sense of happiness and professional fulfillment." (I5) Leadership grounded in care contributes to employee well-being by buffering stress and enhancing fulfillment (Westover, 2024).

The qualitative findings demonstrate that caring leadership functions as a foundational mechanism that enhances trust, commitment, team psychological resources, performance, and well-being. The participants narratives strongly support the quantitative SEM and mediation results, providing rich explanations for how and why caring leadership exerts its influence in kindergarten organizational contexts. This triangulation confirms the robustness and practical relevance of the proposed theoretical framework.

4.7 Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis Results

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design to comprehensively examine the mechanisms through which caring leadership influences employee well-being in kindergarten organizations. By integrating quantitative structural equation modeling (SEM) results with qualitative interview findings analyzed using NVivo 14, this provides a triangulated interpretation of the relationships among caring leadership, organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, and well-being.

The quantitative analysis demonstrated that caring leadership has a significant and positive direct effect on well-being ($\beta = 0.145$, $p < 0.001$), as well as strong indirect effects through organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, and employee performance. These findings are strongly corroborated by the qualitative results. Interviewees consistently emphasized emotional care, individualized consideration, and professional development support as core leadership behaviors that directly enhanced their sense of security, motivation, and emotional well-being.

The quantitative mediation analysis revealed that organizational commitment, trustworthiness, and team psychological capital partially mediated the relationship between caring leadership and well-being, with all indirect effects being statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The qualitative findings provide in-depth explanations for these mediating processes.

Organizational commitment emerged as an emotional and moral response to caring leadership. Organizational Commitment showed a strong mediating effect between caring leadership and well-being. Teachers frequently reported a heightened sense of belonging, loyalty, and responsibility toward their kindergarten when leaders demonstrated care and concern. These emotional bonds translated into stronger affective and normative commitment, which in turn fostered higher levels of psychological well-being.

Trustworthiness was identified as a critical relational mechanism. SEM results confirmed that caring leadership significantly enhanced trustworthiness, which subsequently improved well-being both directly and indirectly through employee performance. Interviewees emphasized leader fairness, benevolence, competence, and transparency as foundations of trust. When teachers trusted their leaders' intentions and decisions, they experienced reduced uncertainty, lower emotional strain, and greater psychological comfort, thus explaining the significant mediating role of trustworthiness observed in the quantitative analysis.

Team psychological capital functioned as a collective-level mediator. Quantitative results indicated that caring leadership positively influenced team psychological capital, which subsequently enhanced both employee performance and well-being. Qualitative evidence revealed that caring leadership fostered team confidence, resilience, optimism, and mutual support. Teachers described teams that "encourage each other during difficulties" and "solve problems collectively," offering a clear qualitative explanation for the significant indirect pathways involving team psychological capital.

Employee performance was identified in the quantitative model as both an outcome of caring leadership and an antecedent of well-being. This relationship was further illuminated by qualitative findings. Teachers reported that emotional support and recognition from leaders increased their enthusiasm, teaching quality, and willingness to engage in cooperative behaviors. Improved task performance and relational performance enhanced teachers' sense of achievement and professional fulfillment, which directly contributed to higher well-being. This qualitative insight explains why employee performance served as an important linking variable between leadership and well-being in the SEM results.

While the quantitative analysis confirmed the strength, direction, and significance of hypothesized relationships, the qualitative findings expanded the interpretation by revealing the lived experiences, emotional processes, and contextual dynamics underlying these relationships. For example, quantitative results indicated partial mediation effects, and qualitative data clarified that caring leadership not only operates through formal

organizational mechanisms but also through daily emotional interactions, informal support, and value-based exchanges. These nuanced processes are difficult to capture through survey data alone but were clearly articulated in the interview narratives.

4.8 Research Model

Caring leadership activates positive organizational commitment strengthens trustworthiness, and fosters collective team psychological capital, which enhance employee performance, ultimately leading to higher levels of employee well-being.

Caring leadership is more suitable than other relational leadership models due to the unique emotional and developmental demands of the field. Preschool educators are tasked with fostering both the academic and emotional growth of young children, which requires significant emotional labor and interpersonal connection. Caring leadership emphasizes emotional support, empathy, and individualized care, aligning closely with the core responsibilities of preschool educators. This leadership style creates a nurturing, supportive work environment that directly addresses the emotional needs of teachers, fostering stronger emotional commitment and reducing burnout. Unlike transformational or transactional leadership models, which often focus on performance outcomes or task achievement, caring leadership prioritizes the well-being of educators, ensuring they feel valued beyond their work output. Additionally, caring leadership is instrumental in developing team psychological capital, such as confidence, resilience, and optimism, which is vital for maintaining a positive, collaborative atmosphere in the classroom. This psychological support not only improves individual well-being but also strengthens the collective abilities of the team, making it a key factor in the overall success of the preschool environment. Ultimately, caring leadership helps build lasting emotional connections between educators and the organization, reducing turnover and fostering long-term professional growth. Therefore, caring leadership is particularly well-suited for preschool contexts, as it nurtures both the emotional and professional needs of educators, ensuring a balanced and supportive work environment.

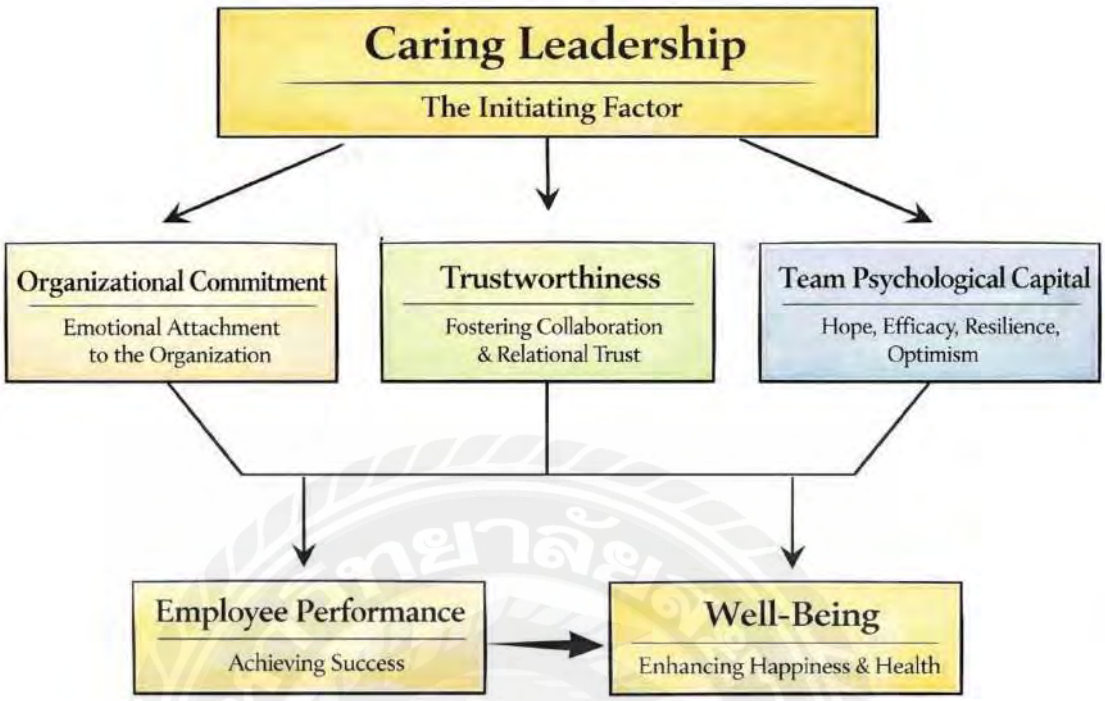


Figure 4.2 Research Model

The Organizational Dynamics model illustrates a comprehensive framework that explains how caring leadership influences employee well-being through multiple interconnected psychological and behavioral mechanisms within educational organizations. Caring leadership is operationalized through five key dimensions: being good to others, maintaining shared interests, appreciating individual uniqueness, promoting self-actualization, and charismatic appeal. These leadership behaviors establish a supportive and value-driven organizational climate, serving as the primary driving force of the entire model.

Caring leadership directly and indirectly shapes Organizational Commitment, which reflects teachers' emotional attachment, perceived costs of leaving, and moral obligation toward the organization. Affective commitment emerges when teachers feel emotionally valued and respected; continuance commitment develops as supportive leadership enhances job stability and perceived benefits; normative commitment is strengthened when leaders demonstrate ethical responsibility and care. In this model, trustworthiness is closely embedded within organizational commitment, indicating that teachers' trust in leadership integrity, competence, and fairness reinforces their willingness to remain committed to the organization.

Caring leadership exerts a significant influence on Team Psychological Capital, a collective-level construct encompassing team confidence, hope, resilience, and optimism. Through emotional support, encouragement, and inclusive management practices, leaders foster a psychologically safe team environment where members believe in their collective abilities, remain optimistic about future goals, and recover effectively from challenges. Team psychological capital functions as a critical social and psychological resource that amplifies the positive effects of leadership at the group level.

These leadership-driven psychological mechanisms subsequently enhance Employee Performance, which is conceptualized as a multidimensional outcome including task performance, relational performance, and learning performance. Teachers working under caring leadership not only demonstrate higher efficiency and teaching quality but also engage more actively in cooperative behaviors and continuous professional learning. Performance thus represents both a direct outcome of positive organizational dynamics and a key pathway through which leadership affects broader well-being outcomes.

The model positions Well-being as the final outcome of organizational dynamics. Employee well-being is reflected through achievements, job recognition, job attraction, and emotional support. The model emphasizes that well-being is not merely a personal emotional state but a holistic experience shaped by leadership care, organizational commitment, team psychological resources, and meaningful work performance. As teachers achieve professional goals, receive recognition, feel emotionally supported, and maintain positive work engagement, their overall sense of well-being is significantly enhanced.

4.9 Validation of Research Model

To ensure the scientific rigor and practical value of the research model, a panel of 9 experts from fields of educational administration, private higher education, and industry were invited to conduct review. The validation process was conducted online, structured around three dimensions: propriety, feasibility, utility.

4.9.1 Expert Information

Table 4.32 Expert Information

No.	Full Name	Affiliation	Participation
E1	Prof. Minghua Zhang	Professor of Educational Administration	Online
E2	Prof. Wei Liu	Professor of Higher Education Management	Online
E3	Prof. Jianhong Wang	Professor of Organizational Psychology	Online
E4	Dr. Yan Li	Associate Professor of Educational Leadership	Onsite
E5	Dr. Qiang Chen	Associate Professor of Human Resource Development	Online
E6	Dr. Xiaomei Sun	Senior Researcher in Early Childhood Education Policy	Onsite
E7	Mr. Hao Zhou	Director of Human Resources, Education Industry Group	Online

No.	Full Name	Affiliation	Participation
E8	Ms. Lijuan Xu	Senior Management Consultant, Organizational Development	Onsite
E9	Mr. Peng Zhao	Executive Manager, Private Education Institution	Onsite

4.9.2 Evaluation Results

Expert rated each indicator on a 5-point scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree) . Items marked with "*" are core indicators

Table 4.33 Expert Evaluation Results

Dimension	No.	Evaluation Indicator	Expert									
			E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	Avg. Score
Propriety 0.3	P1*	Alignment with the transformation needs of private universities	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4.2
	P2*	Logical consistency between theoretical frameworks and empirical analysis	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	4.5
	P3*	Applicability of research methods to Dual Professional Qualifications teacher cultivation	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	4.8

Dimension	No.	Evaluation Indicator	Expert									
			E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	Avg. Score
	P4	Operational feasibility of policy recommendations	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	4.3
	P5	Consideration of cultural differences in incentive strategy design	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3.8
Feasibility 0.4	F1*	Cost control capability of incentive programs	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	5	5	4.6
	F2	Accessibility of industry-academia cooperation resources	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	4.4
	F3	Implementation challenges of Dual Professional Qualifications teacher certification systems	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3.9
	F4	Compatibility of digital training	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	4	5	4.7

Dimension	No.	Evaluation Indicator	Expert									
			E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	Avg. Score
		platforms across disciplines										
	F5	Sustainability of dynamic evaluation mechanisms	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4.2
Utility 0.3	U1*	Enhancement effects on teachers' Self-Efficacy	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.0
	U2	Improvement outcomes for students' vocational skills	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	5	4.6
	U3	Increase in corporate satisfaction with talent cultivation	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	4	4.3
	U4	Conversion efficiency of social capital into educational resources	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3.8
	U5	Effectiveness of long-term career development support systems	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	4.7

4.9.3 Validation Results

Table 4.34 Validation Results

Dimension	Total Score Range	Avg. Score	Std. Deviation	Conclusion
Propriety	15—75	4.3	0.51	Highly Appropriate
Feasibility	20—100	4.4	0.61	Fully Feasible
Utility	15—75	4.5	0.68	Significant Utility

4.9.4 Expert Comments

Expert 1 (Educational Administration Professor):

"The research framework and variable selection are theoretically sound and highly appropriate for studying leadership and well-being in educational organizations."

Expert 2 (Higher Education Management Scholar):

"The study design demonstrates strong feasibility, with clear procedures that can be realistically implemented in kindergarten and educational settings."

Expert 3 (Organizational Psychology Professor):

"The analytical approach and interpretation of results are methodologically rigorous and appropriate for explaining psychological mechanisms at the team level."

Expert 4 (Educational Leadership Specialist):

"The integration of caring leadership with organizational commitment and trust provides meaningful insights that are highly relevant to leadership practice."

Expert 5 (Human Resource Development Expert):

"The findings are practically useful for improving employee performance and well-being through leadership development interventions."

Expert 6 (Early Childhood Education Policy Researcher):

"The study offers valuable guidance for early childhood institutions seeking to enhance teacher well-being and organizational stability."

Expert 7 (Industry HR Director):

"The conclusions have strong applicability and can inform leadership training and performance management systems in educational organizations."

Expert 8 (Organizational Development Consultant):

"The proposed model is both feasible and useful for diagnosing organizational climate and guiding leadership improvement initiatives."

Expert 9 (Private Education Executive):

"The research outcomes provide actionable recommendations that can directly support sustainable management and staff retention in private education institutions."

4.9.5 Validation Conclusion

The propriety dimension yielded an average score of 4.3 with a standard deviation of 0.51, indicating that experts largely agreed the research model was highly appropriate and aligned with established academic standards. The feasibility dimension achieved an average score of 4.4 with a standard deviation of 0.61. Experts confirmed that the model could be realistically executed and replicated, supporting its methodological robustness. The utility dimension received the highest average score of 4.5, accompanied by a standard deviation of 0.68, indicating that the research possesses significant practical utility.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter concludes the research's results and recommends strategies. The findings explain the relationships between the studied variables. Finally, it addresses the execution of the investigation results, and proposes future study areas based on the research findings.

5.1 Conclusion

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to systematically examine the mechanisms through which caring leadership influences employee well-being in kindergarten organizations.

The quantitative was based on survey data collected from 678 kindergarten teachers and analyzed using reliability analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, structural equation modeling (SEM), and mediation analysis with PROCESS and bootstrap techniques. The results demonstrate strong measurement quality and clear structural relationships among the core variables. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all major variables exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.80, with overall reliability values above 0.95, indicating high measurement stability. The KMO value reached 0.984, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant (χ^2 = 61,218.322, df = 5,460, $p < 0.001$), confirming the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis extracted six factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, explaining 63.68% of the total variance, demonstrating strong structural validity of the measurement model.

(1) Direct Effects of Caring Leadership

Caring leadership significantly predicted organizational commitment (β = 0.533, $p < 0.001$), trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.566$, $p < 0.001$), and team psychological capital ($\beta = 0.573$, $p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that leaders' caring behaviors strongly enhance teachers' emotional attachment, trust perceptions, and collective psychological resources. Caring leadership also showed a significant direct effect on employee well-being ($\beta = 0.102$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that leadership care contributes to well-being beyond indirect pathways. Model fit indices demonstrated good overall fit (CFI = 0.974, TLI = 0.969, RMSEA = 0.062), confirming the adequacy of the proposed structural model.

(2) Mediating Mechanisms

The indirect effect of caring leadership on well-being through organizational commitment was 0.251 ($z = 9.276$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI [0.201, 0.306]). Through trustworthiness, the indirect effect reached 0.307 ($z = 10.015$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI [0.247, 0.370]). The indirect effect via team employee performance was 0.299 ($z = 9.560$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI [0.243, 0.365]). The total effect of caring leadership on well-being was 0.531, confirming the robustness and cumulative strength of both direct and indirect pathways.

(3) Qualitative Research Conclusions

The qualitative phase involved semi-structured interviews with eight key informants from public and private kindergartens, including principals, teaching directors, backbone teachers, and administrative staff. NVivo 14 was used for systematic coding and thematic analysis. The coding analysis produced clear thematic patterns aligned with the quantitative model. Caring leadership emerged as the most frequently referenced theme, with high reference counts related to emotional care, individualized consideration, and professional development support. Interviewees consistently described leadership care as daily emotional support, respectful communication, and attention to personal and professional needs. Organizational commitment was primarily reflected through affective and normative dimensions. Teachers frequently expressed strong emotional attachment, a sense of belonging, and moral responsibility toward their kindergarten when leadership care was present. Trustworthiness was associated with leaders' fairness, consistency, and competence, which reduced uncertainty and enhanced psychological security. Team psychological capital was reflected in collective confidence, resilience, and mutual support, particularly during periods of high workload or external pressure.

Interview findings revealed that caring leadership indirectly enhanced employee performance by increasing motivation, engagement, and willingness to cooperate. Teachers reported higher teaching enthusiasm, improved instructional quality, and stronger collaborative behaviors when they felt emotionally supported and trusted leadership decisions. These performance improvements were closely linked to enhanced well-being, manifested in greater job satisfaction, emotional stability, and a stronger sense of professional accomplishment. Well-being was frequently described as a holistic experience involving emotional comfort, recognition, achievement satisfaction, and interpersonal support. Emotional support from leaders and colleagues was repeatedly mentioned as a critical buffer against work stress, reinforcing the mediating roles identified in the quantitative analysis.

By integrating quantitative and qualitative findings, this study concludes that caring leadership exerts a comprehensive and multi-level influence on employee well-being in kindergarten organizations. Quantitative results establish the strength, direction, and significance of causal relationships, while qualitative findings explain how these relationships unfold in daily organizational life. Caring leadership operates simultaneously through emotional, relational, collective, and performance-based mechanisms, confirming its central role in promoting sustainable employee well-being. The convergence of quantitative robustness and qualitative depth provides strong empirical support for the proposed theoretical framework and offers a solid foundation for both academic advancement and practical leadership development in early childhood education contexts.

5.2 Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the effect of caring leadership on organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, and employee well-being in kindergarten in Weifang, China?

The findings of this study provide strong empirical evidence that caring leadership exerts a broad, systematic, and multifaceted influence on organizational

commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, well-being among kindergarten teachers in Weifang, China. By integrating quantitative SEM results with qualitative interview evidence, this research demonstrates that caring leadership operates not merely as a leadership style, but as a relational and moral leadership orientation that reshapes teachers' emotional experiences, social exchanges, collective psychological resources, performance, and well-being.

1) Caring leadership as a foundational driver of organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, well-being

The quantitative findings reveal that caring leadership has strong and significant positive effects on organizational commitment, trustworthiness, and team psychological capital. These results suggest that caring leadership functions as an upstream or initiating factor that triggers a cascade of positive organizational processes. This conclusion is highly consistent with contemporary leadership scholarship emphasizing relational, ethical, and human-centered leadership approaches (Hong et al., 2021; Nong et al., 2023; Westover, 2024).

From a relational leadership perspective, leadership effectiveness is embedded in everyday interactions characterized by empathy, respect, and individualized consideration (Watson et al., 2018; Deluga, 2021). Caring leadership aligned with this perspective by prioritizing emotional care, personalized support, and long-term professional development. In emotionally intensive work environments such as kindergartens leadership behaviors that convey genuine care are particularly salient. These findings extend prior research by demonstrating that caring leadership affects individual attitudes and shapes collective psychological states. The significant relationship between caring leadership and team psychological capital indicates that leadership care transcends dyadic leader–follower relationships and fosters shared confidence, resilience, optimism, and mutual support within teams. This supports earlier work suggesting that leaders play a critical role in cultivating collective psychological resources through modeling supportive behaviors and creating psychologically safe environments (Luthans et al., 2007; Geremias et al., 2022).

2) Organizational commitment as an emotional and moral bridge

Organizational commitment emerged as a key mechanism through which caring leadership influences both employee performance and well-being. SEM results confirmed that caring leadership significantly enhances organizational commitment, which in turn positively predicts well-being and employee performance, and partially mediates the relationship between caring leadership and well-being. These findings are consistent with social exchange theory and affective commitment theory, which posit that teachers reciprocate supportive and benevolent leadership with loyalty, identification, and sustained engagement (Chowdhury et al., 2002; Paauwe, 2022). Caring leadership signals that teachers are valued as labor resources and whole persons, strengthening emotional attachment and moral obligation toward the organization.

3)Trustworthiness as a critical relational mechanism

Trustworthiness was identified as another powerful mediator between caring leadership and well-being. The quantitative results demonstrate that caring leadership significantly enhances perceptions of trustworthiness, which in turn positively affects

both employee performance and well-being. This finding aligns with extensive research highlighting trust as a cornerstone of effective leadership and healthy organizational climates (Welsh, 2012; Toreini et al., 2020). Caring leadership strengthens trust by signaling benevolence, integrity, and fairness, reducing uncertainty and perceived relational risk. When teachers trust their leaders' intentions and competence, they experience lower emotional strain, reduced fear of unfair treatment, and greater psychological comfort (Kniffin, 2021; Qalati et al., 2022).

This study demonstrates that trustworthiness not only directly enhances well-being and indirectly contributes to well-being through improved employee performance. This dual pathway highlights trust as both an emotional buffer and a motivational catalyst, reinforcing the idea that trust is central to sustaining both effectiveness and psychological health in educational organizations.

4) Team psychological capital as a collective-level mechanism

Team psychological capital functioned as a collective-level mediator linking caring leadership to both employee performance and well-being. The SEM results indicate that caring leadership positively influences team psychological capital, which subsequently enhances well-being and performance outcomes. This finding underscores the importance of examining leadership effects beyond the individual level (Paauwe, 2022). In kindergarten settings, where collaboration among teachers is essential for managing classrooms, supporting children, and responding to unexpected challenges, team psychological capital becomes particularly critical (Chin et al., 2023). By fostering optimism, confidence, and resilience at the team level, caring leadership indirectly enhances individual well-being and performance through shared emotional and cognitive resources.

5) Employee performance as a linking to well-being

Employee performance was found to be both an outcome of caring leadership and an antecedent of well-being. The quantitative results confirm that organizational commitment, trustworthiness, and team psychological capital significantly predict employee performance, which in turn positively influences well-being. This finding supports the notion that performance and well-being are mutually reinforcing rather than competing outcomes. Enhanced task performance and relational performance contributed to a sense of achievement, professional fulfillment, and self-worth, which directly improved their well-being. This supports prior research suggesting that meaningful and successful work experiences are central to psychological well-being, particularly in value-driven professions such as education (Westover, 2024).

The study demonstrates that caring leadership has both direct and indirect effects on well-being. The significant direct path from caring leadership to well-being indicates that leadership care enhances teachers' emotional states beyond formal organizational mechanisms. This direct effect likely reflects daily emotional interactions, informal support, and value-based exchanges that are difficult to fully capture through structural variables alone. The significant partial mediation effects of organizational commitment, trustworthiness, and team psychological capital highlight the complex, multi-layered pathways through which caring leadership operates.

Research Question 2: What are the mediating roles of organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, and employee performance in the relationship between caring leadership and employee well-being in kindergartens in Weifang, China?

The results of this study clarified that organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, and employee performance were not merely correlates of well-being but functioned as critical psychological and relational pathways through which caring leadership enhanced kindergarten teachers' well-being. These constructs jointly served as both mechanisms and amplifiers of well-being in educational organizations, reflecting the intertwined psychological and social dimensions of teachers work experiences.

Organizational commitment played a central role in linking caring leadership to well-being, acting as an emotional and motivational conduit that translated relational leadership care into psychological benefits. The SEM results demonstrated that organizational commitment positively predicted well-being and significantly mediated the effect of caring leadership on well-being. This finding indicated that teachers who experienced stronger emotional bonds with their organizations tended to report higher levels of psychological well-being. This result was consistent with prior studies by Li (2019) and Geremias et al. (2022), who argued that affective commitment was closely associated with psychological fulfillment and emotional stability in educational contexts.

The qualitative findings further illustrated this mechanism. Many interviewees described their kindergarten as a "family" and expressed a strong sense of belonging. These emotional bonds enabled teachers to derive meaning and security from their work, which enhanced their well-being. This pattern was consistent with social exchange theory and affective commitment theory (Robles et al., 2020), which suggested that emotional attachment fostered reciprocal loyalty and psychological security, both of which were essential for well-being.

Trustworthiness emerged as a key relational mechanism influencing well-being. The SEM analysis indicated that trustworthiness had a significant positive effect on well-being and served as a significant mediator between caring leadership and well-being. Teachers who perceived their leaders as more trustworthy reported lower emotional strain and higher psychological comfort. These findings were aligned with existing literature emphasizing trust as a cornerstone of healthy organizational environments (Welsh, 2012; Toreini et al., 2020). The interview data supported these interpretations. Participants frequently emphasized leader fairness, benevolence, competence, and integrity as foundations of trust. When leaders were perceived as trustworthy, uncertainty and fear were reduced, which alleviated emotional stress. This observation was consistent with the work of Kniffin (2021) and Qalati et al. (2022), who found that trust mitigated uncertainty and protected teachers from psychological strain. Therefore, trustworthiness functioned as a psychological buffer that promoted well-being by reducing anxiety and enhancing emotional stability.

While the quantitative results revealed a relatively weak effect of trustworthiness on well-being, the interview data strongly emphasized the central role of trust in promoting emotional stability and reducing anxiety among teachers. This

discrepancy between the quantitative and qualitative findings warrants further discussion. One possible explanation for this contradiction could be the difference in how trustworthiness was measured in the two approaches. The SEM analysis captured trustworthiness as a single, aggregated variable, potentially oversimplifying the complex and multifaceted nature of trust. In contrast, the interview data allowed for a more nuanced exploration of trust (Ilyas et al., 2022), where participants identified specific aspects of trust—such as leader fairness, benevolence, and competence—that could have a stronger impact on their emotional well-being.

Additionally, the relatively weak effect observed in the quantitative analysis might be due to the indirect nature of the relationship between trust and well-being, where trustworthiness acts as a mediator rather than a direct predictor (Wang et al., 2022). This implies that while trust is important, its influence on well-being might be more evident when mediated by other leadership behaviors or organizational factors. In this sense, trustworthiness may not have been fully captured in the quantitative model as a standalone factor, which could explain why its effect appeared weaker. The qualitative data, however, captured the subtleties of trust's role in shaping emotional comfort, providing a richer understanding of its significance in the educational context.

Team psychological capital played an important role in enhancing well-being by providing collective psychological resources. The quantitative results showed that team psychological capital significantly predicted well-being and mediated the relationship between caring leadership and well-being. Team psychological capital, comprising collective confidence, resilience, optimism, and mutual support, was particularly salient in the emotionally demanding context of kindergarten education. The qualitative findings revealed that teams with higher psychological capital were more likely to support one another during challenges and maintain a positive outlook. These shared beliefs fostered a supportive emotional climate that strengthened individual teachers' psychological states.

Employee performance also played a significant role in improving well-being. The SEM results indicated that employee performance had a significant positive effect on well-being ($\beta = 0.226$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that performance functioned not only as an outcome of leadership and psychological resources but also as an antecedent of well-being. This finding was consistent with the arguments of Aguinis and Solarino (2019) and Chin et al. (2023), who suggested that perceived competence, achievement, and task mastery contributed to psychological satisfaction and intrinsic motivation. The qualitative data further supported this relationship. Teachers reported that caring leadership increased their motivation and teaching quality, leading to better task performance and stronger relational performance. These accomplishments enhanced teachers' sense of professional fulfillment, which in turn improved their well-being.

Caring leadership strengthened emotional attachment and trust, which enhanced psychological security and emotional stability. Team psychological capital provided collective resilience and optimism that supported individual well-being. Third, improved employee performance generated a sense of achievement and competence, further reinforcing well-being. The integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence demonstrated that teacher well-being emerged from a dynamic system of emotional, relational, collective, and performance-based mechanisms rather than from isolated factors.

The results showed that organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, and employee performance played critical and complementary roles in improving well-being in kindergartens in Weifang, China. These variables acted as key psychological and relational mechanisms through which caring leadership exerted its influence, highlighting the importance of emotional bonds, trust, collective psychological resources, and achievement experiences in fostering sustainable well-being in early childhood education settings.

Research Question 3: How can principals employ caring leadership to improve employee well-being in kindergartens in Weifang, China?

The findings of this study indicated that principals improved kindergarten teachers' well-being by enacting caring leadership through emotion-centered practices, relationship-based management, and developmental support strategies. Caring leadership was not implemented as an abstract leadership philosophy, but rather as a set of concrete, daily leadership behaviors that shaped teachers' emotional experiences, relational climates, and professional growth trajectories. This interpretation was strongly supported by both the quantitative SEM results and the qualitative interview evidence.

Principals employed caring leadership primarily by offering emotional care and psychological support, which directly enhanced teachers' emotional well-being. The qualitative findings revealed that principals frequently engaged in empathetic listening, emotional reassurance, and private conversations to address teachers' stress, fatigue, and emotional exhaustion. These practices created a sense of psychological safety and emotional validation, allowing teachers to feel understood and supported.

This finding was consistent with Tigre et al. (2022) and Rambod et al. (2023), who reported that emotionally supportive leadership reduced stress and burnout while enhancing teachers' psychological well-being. By acknowledging teachers' emotional struggles and responding with empathy rather than control, principals reduced emotional strain and fostered positive affect. The SEM results further confirmed this mechanism, as caring leadership demonstrated a significant direct effect on well-being, indicating that emotional care functioned as an immediate and powerful pathway to improved well-being.

Interview data showed that principals adapted management approaches based on teachers' personal characteristics, family situations, and professional needs. Rather than applying uniform management practices, principals demonstrated flexibility, respect, and recognition of individual differences. This leadership approach aligned with the findings of Chowdhury et al. (2023), who emphasized that individualized and respectful leadership strengthened teachers' sense of dignity and psychological comfort. Teachers in this study reported feeling respected and valued when principals acknowledged their individuality, which enhanced motivation, emotional stability, and well-being. These findings suggested that individualized consideration operated as a relational mechanism that reinforced teachers' sense of self-worth and emotional security.

Both quantitative and qualitative results indicated that trustworthiness was a key mechanism linking caring leadership to well-being. Teachers reported higher levels of well-being when principals consistently treated staff fairly, communicated decisions

openly, and acted in accordance with ethical principles. These findings were consistent with Geremias et al. (2022) and Kniffin (2021), who argued that trust-based leadership reduced uncertainty and emotional tension in organizations. When principals were perceived as trustworthy, teachers experienced less anxiety regarding evaluations, workload distribution, and organizational changes. This reduction in uncertainty created emotional stability, which significantly improved well-being. Thus, caring leadership was enacted not only through emotional support but also through ethical and transparent leadership practices.

The SEM results supported this observation, as team psychological capital significantly predicted well-being. Principals' caring behaviors facilitated a positive team climate in which teachers felt supported by colleagues, not isolated (Bairamova et al., 2024). These collective psychological resources amplified individual well-being by providing shared emotional strength and coping capacity. This finding suggested that principals improved well-being not only at the individual level but also by shaping the broader social and psychological environment of the kindergarten (Li, 2024).

In addition to emotional and relational care, principals employed caring leadership by supporting teachers' professional development. Interviewees reported that principals provided training opportunities, career guidance, and constructive feedback, which enhanced teachers' sense of professional growth and future prospects. This practice was particularly important in linking caring leadership to employee performance and well-being. As teachers improved their teaching skills and performance, they experienced greater achievement satisfaction and professional fulfillment, which directly contributed to well-being. These findings suggested that caring leadership extended beyond short-term emotional support to long-term developmental investment, reinforcing both performance and psychological health.

The results demonstrated that principals improved teachers' well-being by operationalizing caring leadership through concrete emotional, relational, and developmental practices. By providing emotional support, respecting individual differences, building trust, fostering team psychological capital, and supporting professional growth, principals created a supportive organizational environment that enhanced well-being. These findings highlighted caring leadership as a practical and effective leadership approach for promoting sustainable well-being in early childhood education contexts.

5.3 Recommendation

Strategy 1: Institutionalizing Caring Leadership as a Core Organizational Value

The improvement of teacher well-being required caring leadership to move beyond individual leadership behavior and become an institutionalized organizational value. When caring leadership was embedded into the kindergarten's guiding philosophy, it shaped how decisions were made, how policies were interpreted, and how daily management practices were carried out. This institutionalization ensured that care was not dependent on the personality of a single principal but instead became a stable and enduring characteristic of the organization. Teachers were more likely to perceive the kindergarten as a supportive and humane workplace when care was consistently reflected in formal structures and informal practices.

Caring leadership involved integrating care-oriented principles into official documents, management procedures, and communication channels. When caring values were reflected in development plans, evaluation systems, and internal regulations, teachers received clear signals that their emotional well-being and professional dignity were organizational priorities. This alignment between values and practices reduced uncertainty and reinforced teachers' confidence in the organization. Over time, a shared understanding of caring leadership strengthened teachers' psychological attachment and created a sense of collective identity.

Caring leadership created a fertile environment for the development of trust, organizational commitment, and psychological resources. Teachers working in such environments were more likely to experience emotional stability and sustained motivation, which directly supported their well-being. By embedding care into the organizational system, kindergartens established a foundation upon which other positive outcomes could be continuously cultivated.

Principals should take a proactive role in modeling caring leadership behaviors by regularly engaging with teachers, providing emotional support, and fostering an open, empathetic communication environment. Educational administrators at the regional or district level should provide guidance on integrating caring leadership into kindergarten curricula and staff development programs. Policymakers should advocate for the incorporation of caring leadership principles into national or local education policies, emphasizing the importance of teachers' emotional well-being and professional satisfaction. School-level leaders should ensure that caring leadership is embedded in daily practices and that all staff members, including teaching assistants and support staff, are trained in supportive leadership techniques.

Strategy 2: Enhancing Teachers' Organizational Commitment through Emotional Support Systems

Teacher well-being was closely linked to the extent to which teachers felt emotionally connected to their kindergarten. Emotional support systems played a central role in strengthening this connection by addressing teachers' psychological and emotional needs rather than focusing solely on task completion. When principals consistently demonstrated concern for teachers' experiences, challenges, and aspirations, teachers were more likely to develop a sense of belonging and loyalty. This emotional bond reinforced their willingness to remain in the organization and invest sustained effort in their work.

Emotional support was expressed through meaningful communication, attentive listening, and timely responses to teachers' concerns. Principals who regularly engaged in dialogue with teachers gained a deeper understanding of their professional pressures and personal circumstances. When teachers felt heard and respected, they perceived the organization as a source of emotional security rather than stress. This perception strengthened their emotional commitment and reduced feelings of isolation or disengagement.

As organizational commitment increased, teachers experienced greater psychological stability and job satisfaction. Strong commitment provided teachers with a sense of purpose and continuity, which buffered them against work-related stress. Over time, emotionally supportive environments transformed teachers' relationship

with the organization from a transactional arrangement into a relational bond, thereby contributing directly to improved well-being and reduced turnover intentions.

Enhancing teachers' organizational commitment through emotional support systems is vital for fostering a strong connection between teachers and their kindergarten. When principals demonstrate consistent care for teachers' emotional and psychological well-being, teachers are more likely to develop a sense of belonging and loyalty to the organization. Emotional support, expressed through meaningful communication, active listening, and responsiveness to teachers' concerns, helps create a secure environment where teachers feel valued and understood. As emotional support increases, teachers' organizational commitment strengthens, leading to greater psychological stability, job satisfaction, and reduced turnover intentions.

Strategy 3: Cultivating Trustworthiness through Transparent and Consistent Management

Trustworthiness was a fundamental condition for teacher well-being because it shaped teachers' perceptions of fairness, safety, and predictability within the kindergarten. When management practices were opaque or inconsistent, teachers experienced uncertainty and emotional strain. Conversely, transparent and consistent leadership behavior reduced anxiety and fostered a sense of psychological security. Trustworthy management created an environment in which teachers felt protected and respected, allowing them to focus on teaching rather than self-preservation.

Trustworthiness required principals to communicate openly about decisions, expectations, and organizational changes. Clear explanations regarding workload allocation, evaluation criteria, and policy implementation helped teachers understand the rationale behind management actions. Consistency between stated principles and actual behavior was particularly important, as discrepancies undermined credibility and eroded trust. When fairness and transparency were maintained over time, teachers developed confidence in leadership intentions.

As trustworthiness increased, teachers experienced lower emotional tension and greater peace of mind. This reduction in psychological burden contributed directly to improved well-being. Trust also strengthened interpersonal relationships within the organization, enabling teachers to interact more openly and cooperatively. In this way, trustworthiness functioned as both an emotional safeguard and a relational resource that sustained teacher well-being.

Principals should actively foster team psychological capital by creating opportunities for teachers to collaborate, share experiences, and provide mutual support. Educational administrators at the regional or district level should provide resources and training that emphasize the importance of team psychological capital in early childhood education, promoting strategies for collective resilience and emotional support. Policymakers should prioritize the integration of team psychological capital into educational frameworks, ensuring that policies and initiatives support collaboration and emotional well-being among teaching teams. School-level leaders should embed collaborative practices into the daily operations of the kindergarten, ensuring that teachers at all levels are equipped with the skills and opportunities to build collective psychological resources that enhance both individual and team well-being.

Strategy 4: Strengthening Team Psychological Capital through Collective Support and Collaboration

Teacher well-being was influenced not only by individual psychological resources but also by the collective psychological strength of teaching teams. Team psychological capital developed when teachers shared confidence, optimism, resilience, and a sense of collective efficacy. In kindergarten settings, where collaboration and emotional labor were integral to daily work, strong team psychological capital played a vital role in buffering stress and enhancing emotional balance.

Principals fostered team psychological capital by encouraging collaboration and mutual support rather than competition. Opportunities for joint lesson planning, shared reflection, and peer mentoring allowed teachers to learn from one another and feel supported during challenging situations. When teachers faced difficulties collectively, they were more likely to view challenges as manageable rather than overwhelming. This collective coping mechanism strengthened resilience and reduced emotional exhaustion.

As team psychological capital increased, teachers experienced a stronger sense of belonging and shared purpose. The presence of a supportive team environment enhanced emotional well-being by providing reassurance, encouragement, and collective motivation. Over time, these shared psychological resources contributed to a more positive organizational climate and sustained improvements in teacher well-being.

Strategy 5: Aligning Performance Management with Teacher Well-Being

Employee performance contributed positively to well-being only when performance management systems were designed to support rather than pressure teachers. In kindergarten contexts, excessive emphasis on outcomes without adequate support increased stress and undermined emotional health. Aligning performance management with well-being required principals to adopt a developmental orientation that emphasized growth, learning, and encouragement.

When teachers understood performance standards and received constructive feedback, they were more likely to experience a sense of competence and accomplishment. Development-oriented evaluations allowed teachers to view performance improvement as an opportunity rather than a threat, reducing anxiety and fear of failure. Teachers experienced greater professional satisfaction and self-efficacy. These positive emotional experiences reinforced motivation and contributed to overall well-being. By aligning performance management with psychological support, kindergartens ensured that performance enhancement and well-being improvement progressed simultaneously rather than in opposition.

Strategy 6: Embedding Individualized Care into Daily Leadership Practices

Individualized care constituted the most direct expression of caring leadership in every day kindergarten management. Teachers differed in their professional backgrounds, emotional needs, and life circumstances, and standardized management approaches often failed to address these differences. When principals demonstrated individualized care, teachers were more likely to feel understood and respected, which directly enhanced their emotional well-being.

Individualized care involved flexible leadership responses to teachers' specific situations. Principals who adjusted workloads during periods of high stress, provided emotional reassurance during personal difficulties, and acknowledged individual efforts created a supportive leadership environment. These practices required attentiveness, empathy, and ongoing interaction rather than formal policy changes. Sustained individualized care strengthened teachers' emotional resilience and trust in leadership. Over time, teachers developed a stronger sense of psychological safety and emotional stability, which reduced burnout and enhanced overall well-being. This strategy highlighted the importance of everyday leadership behaviors in shaping long-term emotional outcomes.

Strategy 7: Creating a Psychologically Safe and Caring Kindergarten Climate

A psychologically safe climate was essential for sustaining teacher well-being in kindergartens, where emotional labor and interpersonal demands were high. Psychological safety referred to an environment in which teachers felt free to express ideas, seek help, and acknowledge difficulties without fear of negative consequences. Such a climate reduced emotional strain and fostered authentic engagement.

Principals played a decisive role in shaping psychological safety through their responses to mistakes, feedback, and interpersonal interactions. When errors were treated as learning opportunities rather than failures, and open communication was encouraged, teachers felt less pressure to conceal difficulties. Respectful interactions and supportive dialogue further reinforced a caring organizational atmosphere. This environment enabled teachers to invest emotionally in their work while maintaining psychological well-being. Ultimately, a caring and psychologically safe climate transformed well-being into a shared organizational outcome rather than an individual burden.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

Despite the theoretical and practical contributions of this study, several limitations should be acknowledged, which also point to directions for future research. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design, which restricts the ability to draw causal inferences among caring leadership, mediating variables, and employee well-being. Future studies are encouraged to employ longitudinal or experimental designs to better capture dynamic changes and causal relationships over time. Second, although the mixed-methods approach enhanced the robustness of the findings, the quantitative data relied primarily on self-reported measures, which may be subject to common method bias and social desirability effects. Subsequent research could incorporate multi-source data, such as supervisor ratings, peer evaluations, or objective performance indicators, to improve measurement validity. Third, the research context was limited to kindergarten organizations, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings to other educational levels or organizational settings. Future research should examine the applicability of the proposed framework in primary schools, secondary schools, higher education institutions, and non-educational organizations to enhance external validity. While this study focused on organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, and employee performance as key mediators, future research could explore additional contextual and individual factors to further enrich the understanding of how caring leadership influences employee well-being across diverse contexts.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: Questionnaire

To Questionnaire Respondent:

Thank you for your participation. This questionnaire consists of two parts. Part One collects demographic information. Part Two investigates kindergarten caring leadership for employee performance and well-being in Weifang, China. Thank you once again for your participation. If you require further information or assistance, please feel free to contact us.

To ensure the objectivity and accuracy of the research findings, please provide objective responses.

Part 1: Demographic Information

Remark: Please indicate your choice by marking √ in [ ] or filling in the blank.

1.Gender:

[ ] Male [ ] Female

2.Age:

A Below 25 years' old

B 25-30 years' old

C 31-40 years' old

D Above 40years old

3. Highest Education Level:

A Bachelor's Degree

B Master's Degree

C Doctoral Degree (Ph.D.)

D Other (Please specify)

4. Professional Title:

A Teaching Assistant

B Lecturer

C Associate Professor

D Professor

5 Years of Teaching Experience:

A less than 3 years

B 3-5

C 6-8

D more than 8 years

Part 2: Relational Factors

This section utilizes a Likert five-point scale. Please select the option that best reflects your genuine feelings based on the following scale:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

Please review each statement and select the number corresponding to your opinion.

(1) Caring Leadership

Dimension	**Measurement item**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Being Good to Others	1. The principal treats teachers in a friendly and approachable manner.					
	2. The principal considers the actual situations of individual teachers and cares about their interests.					
	3. The principal is willing to listen and encourages teachers to express their true feelings.					
	4. The principal provides support when teachers face stress or negative emotions.					
	5. The principal communicates regularly with teachers to understand their work and personal needs.					
Appreciate Uniqueness	6. The principal recognizes and values teachers' professional contributions.					
	7. The principal praises teachers appropriately for their achievements.					
	8. The principal respects teachers and avoids embarrassing them in front of others.					
	9. The principal listens to teachers' opinions and adopts reasonable suggestions.					
Promoting Self-Actualization	10. The principal offers sincere advice for teachers' career development.					
	11. The principal helps teachers to set realistic and attainable career goals.					
	12. The principal provides opportunities and resources for teachers' growth.					
	13. The principal creates conditions that allow teachers to apply and develop their strengths.					
Maintaining the Shared Interest	14. The principal works to improve the overall working environment for teachers.					
	15. The principal encourages teamwork and					

Dimension	Measurement item	1	2	3	4	5
	guides teachers to collaborate effectively.					
	16. The principal protects teachers' legitimate rights and professional interests.					
Charismatic Appeal	17. The principal demonstrates strong professional competence in managing the kindergarten.					
	18. The principal remains calm and composed when facing difficulties.					
	19. The principal shows empathy and shares teachers' concerns and challenges.					
	20. The principal takes responsibility for decisions and outcomes at work.					
	21. The principal demonstrates passion and commitment to their work.					
	22. The principal is open-minded and innovative in educational management.					
	23. The principal treats all teachers fairly and equitably.					
	24. The principal provides guidance for teachers' professional advancement.					
	25.The principal has a broad vision and leads teachers in long-term professional development.					

(2) Organizational Commitments

Dimension	Measurement item	1	2	3	4	5
Affective Commitment	1.I feel happy to dedicate my career to this kindergarten.					
	2.I enjoy talking about my kindergarten with people outside.					
	3.I feel that the successes and difficulties of this kindergarten are my own.					
	4.I feel a strong sense of belonging to this kindergarten.					
	5.I have a deep personal attachment to this kindergarten.					
	6.I feel proud to be part of this kindergarten.					
	7. I feel emotionally connected with my colleagues in this kindergarten.					
	8.I would be disappointed if I had to leave this kindergarten.					
Continuance Commitment	9. I am concerned about the difficulties I would face if I left this kindergarten.					
	10. Even if I wanted to leave, it would not be easy to do so.					
	11. Leaving this kindergarten now would interrupt my professional relationships.					
	12. I stay at this kindergarten partly because leaving would require significant personal sacrifices.					
	13. I feel that my career options are limited if I were to					

Dimension	Measurement item	1	2	3	4	5
	leave this kindergarten.					
	14. I stay because finding a similar position elsewhere would be difficult.					
	15. Leaving this kindergarten would reduce my future professional opportunities.					
	16. I remain at this kindergarten because the costs of leaving outweigh the benefits.					
Normative Commitment	17. I feel a responsibility to remain loyal to this kindergarten.					
	18. Leaving this kindergarten for another opportunity feels wrong to me.					
	19. I continue working here because I believe loyalty is important.					
	20. I was taught to value loyalty to an organization like this kindergarten.					
	21. Staying with this kindergarten aligns with my personal sense of duty.					
	22. I feel it is ethically important to honor my commitment to this kindergarten.					
	23. I believe that being a dedicated teacher in this kindergarten is the right thing to do.					

(3) Trustworthiness

Variables	Measurement item	1	2	3	4	5
Ability	1.The principal is capable of performing their duties effectively.					
	2.The principal has a strong track record of success in their responsibilities.					
	3.The principal demonstrates a deep understanding of tasks that need to be accomplished.					
	4.I have confidence in the principal's professional skills.					
	5.The principal possesses expertise that contributes to the kindergarten's performance.					
	6.The principal has extensive experience in educational management.					
Benevolence	7.The principal genuinely cares about my well-being.					
	8.The principal considers my professional needs and aspirations.					
	9.The principal would never intentionally do anything to harm me.					
	10.The principal shows concern for matters that are important to me.					
	11.The principal supports me when I face challenges at work.					
Integrity	12.The principal demonstrates fairness in decision-making and interactions.					
	13.I can trust the principal to honor commitments consistently.					
	14.The principal's actions align with their stated values.					

Variables	Measurement item	1	2	3	4	5
	15.The principal adheres to ethical principles in their work.					
	16.The principal acts with honesty and justice.					
	17.The principal's behavior reflects sound professional principles.					

(4) Team Psychological Capital

Variables	Measurement item	1	2	3	4	5
Team Confidence	1.During meetings with management, our team members confidently present issues within the scope of our work.					
	2.Our team believes that our contributions to discussions about the kindergarten's strategies are valuable.					
	3.We are confident that our team can accurately convey information to colleagues.					
Team Hope	4.Our team members actively pursue their work goals.					
	5.Our team can devise multiple approaches to achieve our objectives.					
	6.Our team successfully achieves its work goals.					
	7.When facing difficulties, our team can find multiple solutions to overcome challenges.					
Team Resilience	8.Our team can handle work tasks independently.					
	9.Our team generally remains composed under work-related stress.					
	10.Having overcome previous challenges, our team can face current difficulties effectively.					
Team Optimism	11.Our team members focus on the positive aspects of our work.					
	12.Our team is optimistic about the future development of our work.					

(5) Employee Performance Measurement Scales

Variables	Measurement item	1	2	3	4	5
Task Performance	1.I consistently complete my teaching tasks efficiently and on time.					
	2.I fulfill my work to a high standard according to the kindergarten's performance requirements.					
	3.I possess the professional knowledge and skills required for effective teaching.					
	4.I dedicate my full energy to teaching activities.					
Relational Performance	5.I proactively assist colleagues with their work.					
	6.I adhere to all teaching regulations and professional standards.					
	7.Even without supervision, I willingly take on					

Variables	Measurement item	1	2	3	4	5
	responsibilities beyond my assigned tasks.					
	8.I provide constructive suggestions for management decisions in the kindergarten.					
	9.I continuously learn new teaching knowledge and skills through various channels.					
Learning Performance	10.I apply newly acquired knowledge and skills to improve my teaching effectiveness.					
	11.I actively pursue learning opportunities to enhance my professional competence.					
	12.I reflect on my teaching practices and adjust methods to improve student outcomes.					

(6) Well-being Measurement Scales

Variables	Measurement item	1	2	3	4	5
Achievements	1.I perceive that students enjoy attending my class.					
	2.The working atmosphere in my kindergarten is harmonious.					
	3.I am satisfied with the effectiveness of my teaching.					
	4.My role as a teacher allows me to feel relaxed and fulfilled.					
Job Recognition	5.My work receives support and encouragement from the leadership.					
	6.I believe that the courses I teach are well-received by students.					
	7.I have a positive relationship with the leadership team.					
	8.Teaching fills me with immense joy.					
Job Attraction	9.The classes I am responsible for achieve satisfactory academic results.					
	10.I enjoy interacting with students.					
	11.I am fond of the teaching profession.					
	12.When I encounter problems at work, I can obtain assistance from my superiors.					
Emotional Support	13.When I am in a poor mood, I receive understanding from students.					
	14.Students respect me and value my guidance.					
	15.I can sense that students genuinely like me.					
	16.Students thoroughly enjoy spending time in my class.					

Appendix B: Interview Guideline

Interview Duration: 45–60 minutes

Interviewee: Kindergarten teachers

Opening Script

Hello, thank you very much for participating in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to understand your experiences and perceptions regarding leadership, teamwork, and your work well-being in your kindergarten. Your answers are confidential and will only be used for academic research. Please feel free to share your honest thoughts. There are no right or wrong answers.

Interview Questions

1. Caring Leadership

(1) Can you describe how your principal or leader shows care and support for teachers in daily work?

(2) How does your leader help you cope with work or personal stress? Can you give examples?

(3) Do you feel that your leader respects teachers' individuality and opinions? How does this affect your work?

(4) Has your leader provided guidance or resources to support your professional growth?

(5) Compared with traditional administrative leadership, how does caring leadership affect your teaching motivation and work experience?

2. Organizational Commitment

(1) How strong is your sense of belonging to your kindergarten? Can you share examples?

(2) Are you willing to stay in your kindergarten long-term? Why or why not?

(3) When facing other job opportunities, would you consider leaving? Why?

(4) Do you feel a moral or responsibility-based obligation to stay in your kindergarten? How does it affect your work?

3. Trustworthiness

(1) Do you feel that your leader is reliable and competent in performing duties? Examples?

(2) Is your leader fair and consistent when dealing with teachers? Can you share an experience?

(3) Do you trust your leader to consider teachers' interests and well-being? How does this affect your interactions?

(4) How confident are you in your leader's professional ability and decision-making?

4. Team Psychological Capital

(1) Does your team show confidence in completing tasks? Please give examples.

(2) How does the team respond to challenges or difficulties?

(3) Do team members support each other and find solutions together?

(4) Are you optimistic about your team's future development? How does this affect your work?

5. Employee Performance

(1) How do you evaluate your teaching task completion in terms of efficiency and quality?

(1) Do you proactively assist colleagues or provide suggestions for kindergarten management? Examples?

(1) Do you actively learn new teaching skills and apply them in your classroom?

(1) What do you consider your biggest strengths and areas for improvement in teaching?

6. Well-being

(1) Are you satisfied with your teaching achievements? Why?

(2) Do you feel recognized and encouraged by leadership and colleagues?

(3) Do you enjoy teaching and interacting with students? Please share moments of joy or accomplishment.

(4) When you are in a negative mood, do you receive emotional support from students or colleagues? How does it affect your work and life?

Closing Script

Thank you very much for your time and sharing your experiences. Your insights are very valuable for understanding leadership, teamwork, and teacher well-being in kindergartens. If you think of anything else later, feel free to contact us. Your responses will remain confidential.

Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) Form for Individual Research

Individual Research Title:

KINDERGARTEN CARING LEADERSHIP FOR EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AND WELL-BEING IN WEIFANG, CHINA

Instruction:

This IOC form seeks the expert's feedback on the degree of congruence between the research instrument questions, the study's research objectives, and the definitions of terms. The criteria used for IOC are as follows.

+1= Congruent

0= Questionable

-1= Incongruent

NOTE: For each item of the questionnaire, the study will adopt a Five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly Disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree).

Research Questions:

(1) What is the effect of caring leadership on organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, well-being in kindergarten in Weifang, China?

(2) What is the role of organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, and employee performance in the improvement of well-being in kindergarten in Weifang, China?

(3) How to guide managers to improve kindergarten well-being in practice?

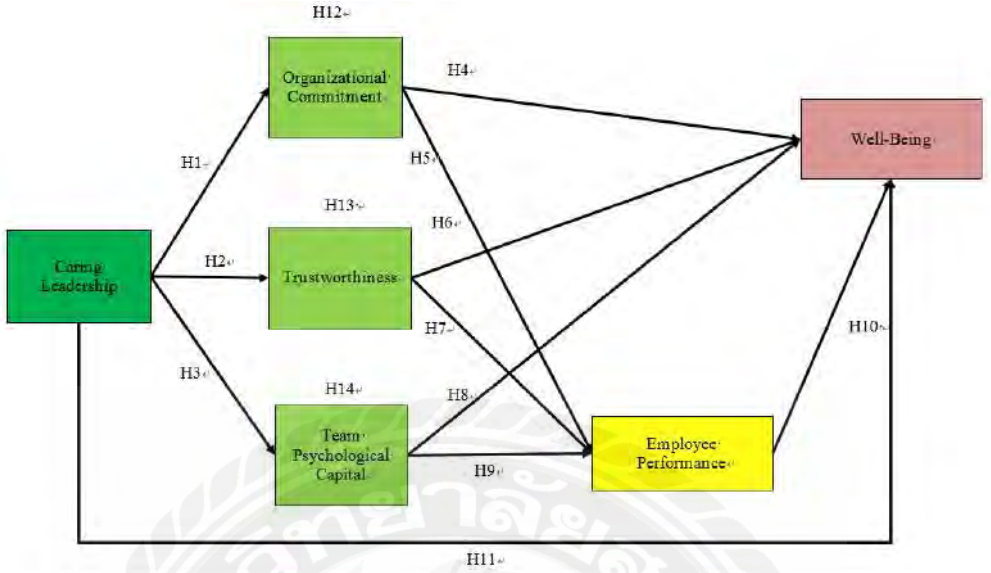
Research Objectives:

(1) To explore the effect of caring leadership on organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, employee performance, and well-being in kindergarten in Weifang, China.

(2) To explore the role of organizational commitment, trustworthiness, team psychological capital, and employee performance in the improvement of well-being in kindergarten in Weifang, China.

(3) To guide managers to improve kindergarten well-being in practice.

Conceptual Framework:



Questionnaire for Quantitative Research Instrument:

Variables and Definitions	Questions	IOC Score			Expert's Comments
		+1	0	-1	
Quantitative Data: Questionnaire					
Demographic Information					
1	Gender				
	- Male				
	- Female				
2	Age				
	A Below 25 years' old				
	B 25-30 years' old				
	C 31-40 years' old				
	D Above 40years old				
3	Education				
	A Bachelor's Degree				
	B Master's Degree				
	C Doctoral Degree (Ph.D.)				
	D Other (Please specify)				
4	Position				
	A Teaching Assistant				
	B Lecturer				
	C Associate Professor				
	D Professor				
5	Teaching Experience:				
	A less than 3 years				
	B 3-5				
	C 6-8				
	D more than 8 years				

Variables and Definitions	Questions	IOC Score			Expert's Comments
		+1	0	-1	
Caring Leadership	Measurement item				
Being Good to Others	1. The principal treats teachers in a friendly and approachable manner.				
	2. The principal considers the actual situations of individual teachers and cares about their interests.				
	3. The principal is willing to listen and encourages teachers to express their true feelings.				
	4. The principal provides support when teachers face stress or negative emotions.				
	5. The principal communicates regularly with teachers to understand their work and personal needs.				
Appreciate Uniqueness	6. The principal recognizes and values teachers' professional contributions.				
	7. The principal praises teachers appropriately for their achievements.				
	8. The principal respects teachers and avoids embarrassing them in front of others.				
	9. The principal listens to teachers' opinions and adopts reasonable suggestions.				
Promoting Self-Actualization	10. The principal offers sincere advice for teachers' career development.				
	11. The principal helps teachers to set realistic and attainable career goals.				
	12. The principal provides opportunities and resources for teachers' growth.				
	13. The principal creates conditions that allow teachers to apply and develop their strengths.				
Maintaining the Shared Interest	14. The principal works to improve the overall working environment for teachers.				
	15. The principal encourages teamwork and guides teachers to collaborate effectively.				
	16. The principal protects teachers' legitimate rights and professional interests.				

Charismatic Appeal	17. The principal demonstrates strong professional competence in managing the kindergarten.				
	18. The principal remains calm and composed when facing difficulties.				
	19. The principal shows empathy and shares teachers' concerns and challenges.				
	20. The principal takes responsibility for decisions and outcomes at work.				
	21. The principal demonstrates passion and commitment to their work.				
	22. The principal is open-minded and innovative in educational management.				
	23. The principal treats all teachers fairly and equitably.				
	24. The principal provides guidance for teachers' professional advancement.				
	25.The principal has a broad vision and leads teachers in long-term professional development.				
Organizational Commitments	Measurement item				
Affective Commitment	1.I feel happy to dedicate my career to this kindergarten.				
	2.I enjoy talking about my kindergarten with people outside.				
	3.I feel that the successes and difficulties of this kindergarten are my own.				
	4.I feel a strong sense of belonging to this kindergarten.				
	5.I have a deep personal attachment to this kindergarten.				
	6.I feel proud to be part of this kindergarten.				
	7. I feel emotionally connected with my colleagues in this kindergarten.				
	8.I would be disappointed if I had to leave this kindergarten.				
Continuance Commitment	9. I am concerned about the difficulties I would face if I left this kindergarten.				
	10. Even if I wanted to leave, it would not be easy to do so.				
	11. Leaving this kindergarten now would interrupt my professional relationships.				
	12. I stay at this kindergarten partly because leaving would require significant personal sacrifices.				
	13. I feel that my career options are limited if				

	I were to leave this kindergarten.				
	14. I stay because finding a similar position elsewhere would be difficult.				
	15. Leaving this kindergarten would reduce my future professional opportunities.				
	16. I remain at this kindergarten because the costs of leaving outweigh the benefits.				
Normative Commit-ment	17. I feel a responsibility to remain loyal to this kindergarten.				
	18. Leaving this kindergarten for another opportunity feels wrong to me.				
	19. I continue working here because I believe loyalty is important.				
	20. I was taught to value loyalty to an organization like this kindergarten.				
	21. Staying with this kindergarten aligns with my personal sense of duty.				
	22. I feel it is ethically important to honor my commitment to this kindergarten.				
	23. I believe that being a dedicated teacher in this kindergarten is the right thing to do.				
Trustworth iness	Measurement item				
Ability	1.The principal is capable of performing their duties effectively.				
	2.The principal has a strong track record of success in their responsibilities.				
	3.The principal demonstrates a deep understanding of tasks that need to be accomplished.				
	4.I have confidence in the principal's professional skills.				
	5.The principal possesses expertise that contributes to the kindergarten's performance.				
	6.The principal has extensive experience in educational management.				
Benevolence	7.The principal genuinely cares about my well-being.				
	8.The principal considers my professional needs and aspirations.				
	9.The principal would never intentionally do anything to harm me.				
	10.The principal shows concern for matters that are important to me.				
	11.The principal supports me when I face challenges at work.				
Integrity	12.The principal demonstrates fairness in decision-making and interactions.				
	13.I can trust the principal to honor commitments consistently.				
	14.The principal's actions align with their				

	stated values.				
	15.The principal adheres to ethical principles in their work.				
	16.The principal acts with honesty and justice.				
	17.The principal's behavior reflects sound professional principles.				
Team Psychological Capital	Measurement item				
Team Confidence	1.During meetings with management, our team members confidently present issues within the scope of our work.				
	2.Our team believes that our contributions to discussions about the kindergarten's strategies are valuable.				
	3.We are confident that our team can accurately convey information to colleagues.				
Team Hope	4.Our team members actively pursue their work goals.				
	5.Our team can devise multiple approaches to achieve our objectives.				
	6.Our team successfully achieves its work goals.				
	7.When facing difficulties, our team can find multiple solutions to overcome challenges.				
Team Resilience	8.Our team can handle work tasks independently.				
	9.Our team generally remains composed under work-related stress.				
	10.Having overcome previous challenges, our team can face current difficulties effectively.				
Team Optimism	11.Our team members focus on the positive aspects of our work.				
	12.Our team is optimistic about the future development of our work.				
Employee Performance	Measurement item				
Task Performance	1.I consistently complete my teaching tasks efficiently and on time.				
	2.I fulfill my work to a high standard according to the kindergarten's performance requirements.				
	3.I possess the professional knowledge and skills required for effective teaching.				
	4.I dedicate my full energy to teaching activities.				
Relational Performance	5.I proactively assist colleagues with their work.				
	6.I adhere to all teaching regulations and				

	professional standards.				
	7.Even without supervision, I willingly take on responsibilities beyond my assigned tasks.				
	8.I provide constructive suggestions for management decisions in the kindergarten.				
	9.I continuously learn new teaching knowledge and skills through various channels.				
Learning Performance	10.I apply newly acquired knowledge and skills to improve my teaching effectiveness.				
	11.I actively pursue learning opportunities to enhance my professional competence.				
	12.I reflect on my teaching practices and adjust methods to improve student outcomes.				
Well-being					
Achievements	1.I perceive that students enjoy attending my class.				
	2.The working atmosphere in my kindergarten is harmonious.				
	3.I am satisfied with the effectiveness of my teaching.				
	4.My role as a teacher allows me to feel relaxed and fulfilled.				
Job Recognition	5.My work receives support and encouragement from the leadership.				
	6.I believe that the courses I teach are well-received by students.				
	7.I have a positive relationship with the leadership team.				
	8.Teaching fills me with immense joy.				
Job Attraction	9.The classes I am responsible for achieve satisfactory academic results.				
	10.I enjoy interacting with students.				
	11.I am fond of the teaching profession.				
	12.When I encounter problems at work, I can obtain assistance from my superiors.				
Emotional Support	13.When I am in a poor mood, I receive understanding from students.				
	14.Students respect me and value my guidance.				
	15.I can sense that students genuinely like me.				
	16.Students thoroughly enjoy spending time in my class.				

Summary of IOC Test

Quantitative Data: Questionnaire							
		E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	IOC
1	Gender	√	√	√	√	√	
	- Male	√	√	√	√	√	
	- Female	√	√	√	√	√	
2	Age	√	√	√	√	√	
	A Below 25 years' old	√	√	√	√	√	
	B 25-30 years' old	√	√	√	√	√	
	C 31-40 years' old	√	√	√	√	√	
	D Above 40years old	√	√	√	√	√	
3	Education	√	√	√	√	√	
	A Bachelor's Degree	√	√	√	√	√	
	B Master's Degree	√	√	√	√	√	
	C Doctoral Degree (Ph.D.)	√	√	√	√	√	
	D Other (Please specify)	√	√	√	√	√	
4	Position	√	√	√	√	√	
	A Teaching Assistant	√	√	√	√	√	
	B Lecturer	√	√	√	√	√	
	C Associate Professor	√	√	√	√	√	
	D Professor	√	√	√	√	√	
5	Teaching Experience:	√	√	√	√	√	
	A less than 3 years	√	√	√	√	√	
	B 3-5	√	√	√	√	√	
	C 6-8	√	√	√	√	√	
	D more than 8 years	√	√	√	√	√	

		E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	IOC
Caring Leadership	Measurement item						
Being Good to Others	1. The principal treats teachers in a friendly and approachable manner.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	2. The principal considers the actual situations of individual teachers and cares about their interests.	1	1	1	1	1	1

	3. The principal is willing to listen and encourages teachers to express their true feelings.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	4. The principal provides support when teachers face stress or negative emotions.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	5. The principal communicates regularly with teachers to understand their work and personal needs.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Appreciate Uniqueness	6. The principal recognizes and values teachers' professional contributions.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	7. The principal praises teachers appropriately for their achievements.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8. The principal respects teachers and avoids embarrassing them in front of others.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	9. The principal listens to teachers' opinions and adopts reasonable suggestions.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Promoting Self-Actualization	10. The principal offers sincere advice for teachers' career development.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	11. The principal helps teachers to set realistic and attainable career goals.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	12. The principal provides opportunities and resources for teachers' growth.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	13. The principal creates conditions that allow teachers to apply and develop their strengths.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maintaining the Shared Interest	14. The principal works to improve the overall working environment for teachers.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	15. The principal encourages teamwork and guides teachers to collaborate effectively.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	16. The principal protects teachers' legitimate rights and professional interests.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Charismatic Appeal	17. The principal demonstrates strong professional competence in managing the kindergarten.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	18. The principal remains calm and composed when facing difficulties.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	19. The principal shows empathy and shares teachers' concerns and challenges.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	20. The principal takes responsibility	1	1	1	1	1	1

	for decisions and outcomes at work.						
	21. The principal demonstrates passion and commitment to their work.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	22. The principal is open-minded and innovative in educational management.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	23. The principal treats all teachers fairly and equitably.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	24. The principal provides guidance for teachers' professional advancement.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	25.The principal has a broad vision and leads teachers in long-term professional development.	1	1	1	1	1	1

Organizational Commitments	Measurement item	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	IOC
Affective Commitment	1.I feel happy to dedicate my career to this kindergarten.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	2.I enjoy talking about my kindergarten with people outside.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	3.I feel that the successes and difficulties of this kindergarten are my own.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	4.I feel a strong sense of belonging to this kindergarten.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	5.I have a deep personal attachment to this kindergarten.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	6.I feel proud to be part of this kindergarten.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	7. I feel emotionally connected with my colleagues in this kindergarten.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.I would be disappointed if I had to leave this kindergarten.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Continuance Commitment	9. I am concerned about the difficulties I would face if I left this kindergarten.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	10. Even if I wanted to leave, it would not be easy to do so.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	11. Leaving this kindergarten now would interrupt my professional relationships.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	12. I stay at this kindergarten partly because leaving would require significant personal sacrifices.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	13. I feel that my career options are limited if I were to leave this kindergarten.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	14. I stay because finding a similar position elsewhere would be difficult.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	15. Leaving this kindergarten would reduce my future professional opportunities.	1	1	1	1	1	1

	16. I remain at this kindergarten because the costs of leaving outweigh the benefits.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Normative Commitment	17. I feel a responsibility to remain loyal to this kindergarten.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	18. Leaving this kindergarten for another opportunity feels wrong to me.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	19. I continue working here because I believe loyalty is important.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	20. I was taught to value loyalty to an organization like this kindergarten.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	21. Staying with this kindergarten aligns with my personal sense of duty.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	22. I feel it is ethically important to honor my commitment to this kindergarten.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	23. I believe that being a dedicated teacher in this kindergarten is the right thing to do.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Trustworthiness	Measurement item						
Ability	1.The principal is capable of performing their duties effectively.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	2.The principal has a strong track record of success in their responsibilities.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	3.The principal demonstrates a deep understanding of tasks that need to be accomplished.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	4.I have confidence in the principal's professional skills.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	5.The principal possesses expertise that contributes to the kindergarten's performance.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	6.The principal has extensive experience in educational management.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Benevolence	7.The principal genuinely cares about my well-being.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.The principal considers my professional needs and aspirations.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	9.The principal would never intentionally do anything to harm me.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	10.The principal shows concern for matters that are important to me.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	11.The principal supports me when I face challenges at work.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Integrity	12.The principal demonstrates fairness in decision-making and interactions.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	13.I can trust the principal to honor commitments consistently.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	14.The principal's actions align with their stated values.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	15.The principal adheres to ethical principles in their work.	1	1	1	1	1	1

	16.The principal acts with honesty and justice.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	17.The principal's behavior reflects sound professional principles.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Team Psychological Capital	Measurement item						
Team Confidence	1.During meetings with management, our team members confidently present issues within the scope of our work.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	2.Our team believes that our contributions to discussions about the kindergarten's strategies are valuable.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	3.We are confident that our team can accurately convey information to colleagues.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Team Hope	4.Our team members actively pursue their work goals.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	5.Our team can devise multiple approaches to achieve our objectives.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	6.Our team successfully achieves its work goals.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	7.When facing difficulties, our team can find multiple solutions to overcome challenges.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Team Resilience	8.Our team can handle work tasks independently.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	9.Our team generally remains composed under work-related stress.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	10.Having overcome previous challenges, our team can face current difficulties effectively.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Team Optimism	11.Our team members focus on the positive aspects of our work.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	12.Our team is optimistic about the future development of our work.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Employee Performance	Measurement item						
Task Performance	1.I consistently complete my teaching tasks efficiently and on time.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	2.I fulfill my work to a high standard according to the kindergarten's performance requirements.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	3.I possess the professional knowledge and skills required for effective teaching.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	4.I dedicate my full energy to teaching activities.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Relational	5.I proactively assist colleagues with their work.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	6.I adhere to all teaching regulations and professional standards.	1	1	1	1	1	1

Performance	7.Even without supervision, I willingly take on responsibilities beyond my assigned tasks.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.I provide constructive suggestions for management decisions in the kindergarten.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	9.I continuously learn new teaching knowledge and skills through various channels.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Learning Performance	10.I apply newly acquired knowledge and skills to improve my teaching effectiveness.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	11.I actively pursue learning opportunities to enhance my professional competence.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	12.I reflect on my teaching practices and adjust methods to improve student outcomes.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Well-being							
Achievements	1.I perceive that students enjoy attending my class.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	2.The working atmosphere in my kindergarten is harmonious.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	3.I am satisfied with the effectiveness of my teaching.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	4.My role as a teacher allows me to feel relaxed and fulfilled.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Job Recognition	5.My work receives support and encouragement from the leadership.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	6.I believe that the courses I teach are well-received by students.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	7.I have a positive relationship with the leadership team.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	8.Teaching fills me with immense joy.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Job Attraction	9.The classes I am responsible for achieve satisfactory academic results.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	10.I enjoy interacting with students.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	11.I am fond of the teaching profession.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	12.When I encounter problems at work, I can obtain assistance from my superiors.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Emotional Support	13.When I am in a poor mood, I receive understanding from students.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	14.Students respect me and value my guidance.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	15.I can sense that students genuinely like me.	1	1	1	1	1	1
	16.Students thoroughly enjoy spending time in my class.	1	1	1	1	1	1

APPENDIX C: Invitation Letter for an Expert

Expert Invitation for Questionnaire IOC

SU 0210.14 / 205

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

10th October 2025

Dear Dr. Xu Xingchun,
Southwest University

Subject: Invitation to be an expert in the IOC (the index of item-objective congruence) assessment

Since Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in English program, Graduate School of Education, works on a dissertation *"Kindergarten Caring Leadership for Employee Performance and Well-Being in Weifang, China"* with Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit (the advisor) and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit (the co-advisor), the Graduate School of Education would like to invite you to be an expert to provide your opinion in an IOC assessment.

The IOC assessment is a significant process for assessing content validity. Ms. Qin Honglei will contact you and coordinate all details herself.

We really appreciate your help.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.14 / 205.01

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

10th October 2025

Dear Professor Chai Linli,
Weifang University

Subject: Invitation to be an expert in the IOC (the index of item-objective congruence) assessment

Since Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in English program, Graduate School of Education, works on a dissertation *"Kindergarten Caring Leadership for Employee Performance and Well-Being in Weifang, China"* with Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit (the advisor) and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit (the co-advisor), the Graduate School of Education would like to invite you to be an expert to provide your opinion in an IOC assessment.

The IOC assessment is a significant process for assessing content validity. Ms. Qin Honglei will contact you and coordinate all details herself.

We really appreciate your help.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.14 / 205.02

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

10th October 2025

Dear Professor Zhang Xiaoyong,
Shandong Normal University

Subject: Invitation to be an expert in the IOC (the index of item-objective congruence) assessment

Since Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in English program, Graduate School of Education, works on a dissertation *"Kindergarten Caring Leadership for Employee Performance and Well-Being in Weifang, China"* with Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit (the advisor) and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit (the co-advisor), the Graduate School of Education would like to invite you to be an expert to provide your opinion in an IOC assessment.

The IOC assessment is a significant process for assessing content validity. Ms. Qin Honglei will contact you and coordinate all details herself.

We really appreciate your help.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.14 / 205.03

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

10th October 2025

Dear Dr. Tonglingwei,
Shandong Vocational College of Science and Technology

Subject: Invitation to be an expert in the IOC (the index of item-objective congruence) assessment

Since Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in English program, Graduate School of Education, works on a dissertation *"Kindergarten Caring Leadership for Employee Performance and Well-Being in Weifang, China"* with Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit (the advisor) and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit (the co-advisor), the Graduate School of Education would like to invite you to be an expert to provide your opinion in an IOC assessment.

The IOC assessment is a significant process for assessing content validity. Ms. Qin Honglei will contact you and coordinate all details herself.

We really appreciate your help.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.14 / 205.04

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

10th October 2025

Dear Dr. Wulei,
Shandong Vocational College of Science and Technology

Subject: Invitation to be an expert in the IOC (the index of item-objective congruence) assessment

Since Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in English program, Graduate School of Education, works on a dissertation *"Kindergarten Caring Leadership for Employee Performance and Well-Being in Weifang, China"* with Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit (the advisor) and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit (the co-advisor), the Graduate School of Education would like to invite you to be an expert to provide your opinion in an IOC assessment.

The IOC assessment is a significant process for assessing content validity. Ms. Qin Honglei will contact you and coordinate all details herself.

We really appreciate your help.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

Unit Information for Data Collection:

SU 0210.04 / 024

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Experimental Kindergarten

Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

In this regard, the student researcher has to collect data from the school principal, teachers, and staffs using the questionnaires. The students will subsequently coordinate with you and provide more details on this matter.

Accordingly, I would like to kindly request for your permission to allow this student researcher to collect data for academic purposes. Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.01

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Municipal Organs First Kindergarten

Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Accordingly, I would like to kindly request for your permission to allow this student researcher to collect data for academic purposes. Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.02

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Beihai Kindergarten

Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.03

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Quiwen Experimental Kindergarten

Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.04

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Economic Development Zone First Kindergarten
Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.05

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Future Star Kindergarten (Gaoxin District Park)
Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.06

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Binhai New District Organ Kindergarten

Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.07

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Hanting District Second Experimental Kindergarten
Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.08

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Changyi Municipal Organ Kindergarten

Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.09

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Fangzi District New Star Kindergarten
Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.10

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Zhucheng Experimental Kindergarten

Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.11

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Shouguang Municipal Organs First Kindergarten
Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.12

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Anqiu Sunshine Kindergarten

Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.13

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Qingzhou City No.1 Kindergarten

Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.14

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Linqu County Organ Kindergarten

Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.15

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Changle County Experimental Kindergarten
Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.16

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Quiwen District Beiyuan Kindergarten
Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.24

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Qingzhou Experimental Kindergarten

Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.23

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Changyi Second Experimental Kindergarten
Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

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Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.22

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang North Star Biligual Kindergarten

Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.21

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Shouguang Mingde Kindergarten

Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.20

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Economic Zone Dongfanghong Kindergarten
Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.19

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Hanting District Hope Kindergarten

Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.18

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Fangzi District Futrue Kindergarten

Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 024.17

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

28th October 2025

Dear Principal of Weifang Hengxin Kindergarten

Subject: Request for Cooperation in Data Collection

This is to certify that Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English Program, Graduate School of Education, Siam University. She is currently conducting research entitled "The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit. Her contact information is as follows: email phd_ed1@siam.edu.

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Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

Expert Invitation to Evaluate the Results:

SU 0210.04 / 038

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

19th December 2025

Dear Prof. Minghua Zhang,
Shandong University

Subject: Invitation to be an expert to evaluate the results.

Since Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English program at the Graduate School of Education, Siam University Thailand, works on a dissertation: "*The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School. China*", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit (the advisor) and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit (an co-advisor), the Graduate School of Education would like to invite you to be an expert to evaluate the results. Ms. Qin Honglei will contact and coordinate all details herself.

We really appreciate your help.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 038.01

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

19th December 2025

Dear Prof. Wei Liu,
Shandong University

Subject: Invitation to be an expert to evaluate the results.

Since Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English program at the Graduate School of Education, Siam University Thailand, works on a dissertation: "*The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China*", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit (the advisor) and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit (an co-advisor), the Graduate School of Education would like to invite you to be an expert to evaluate the results. Ms. Qin Honglei will contact and coordinate all details herself.

We really appreciate your help.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 038.02

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

19th December 2025

Dear Prof. Jianhong Wang,
Weifang University

Subject: Invitation to be an expert to evaluate the results.

Since Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English program at the Graduate School of Education, Siam University Thailand, works on a dissertation: "*The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China*", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit (the advisor) and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit (an co-advisor), the Graduate School of Education would like to invite you to be an expert to evaluate the results. Ms. Qin Honglei will contact and coordinate all details herself.

We really appreciate your help.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 038.03

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

19th December 2025

Dear Dr. Yan Li,
Shandong Normal University

Subject: Invitation to be an expert to evaluate the results.

Since Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English program at the Graduate School of Education, Siam University Thailand, works on a dissertation: "*The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China*", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit (the advisor) and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit (an co-advisor), the Graduate School of Education would like to invite you to be an expert to evaluate the results. Ms. Qin Honglei will contact and coordinate all details herself.

We really appreciate your help.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 038.04

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

19th December 2025

Dear Dr. Qiang Chen,
Weifang University

Subject: Invitation to be an expert to evaluate the results.

Since Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English program at the Graduate School of Education, Siam University Thailand, works on a dissertation: "*The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China*", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit (the advisor) and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit (an co-advisor), the Graduate School of Education would like to invite you to be an expert to evaluate the results. Ms. Qin Honglei will contact and coordinate all details herself.

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Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 038.05

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

19th December 2025

Dear Dr. Xiaomei Sun,
Shandong Normal University

Subject: Invitation to be an expert to evaluate the results.

Since Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English program at the Graduate School of Education, Siam University Thailand, works on a dissertation: "*The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China*", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit (the advisor) and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit (an co-advisor), the Graduate School of Education would like to invite you to be an expert to evaluate the results. Ms. Qin Honglei will contact and coordinate all details herself.

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Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang

Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 038.06

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

19th December 2025

Dear Mr. Hao Zhou,
Shandong Vocational College of Science and Technology

Subject: Invitation to be an expert to evaluate the results.

Since Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English program at the Graduate School of Education, Siam University Thailand, works on a dissertation: *"The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China"*, with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit (the advisor) and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit (an co-advisor), the Graduate School of Education would like to invite you to be an expert to evaluate the results. Ms. Qin Honglei will contact and coordinate all details herself.

We really appreciate your help.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 038.08

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

19th December 2025

Dear Mr. Peng Zhao,
Shandong Vocational College of Science and Technology

Subject: Invitation to be an expert to evaluate the results.

Since Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English program at the Graduate School of Education, Siam University Thailand, works on a dissertation: *"The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China"*, with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit (the advisor) and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit (an co-advisor), the Graduate School of Education would like to invite you to be an expert to evaluate the results. Ms. Qin Honglei will contact and coordinate all details herself.

We really appreciate your help.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 038.07

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

19th December 2025

Dear Ms. Lijuan Xu,
Shandong Vocational College of Science and Technology

Subject: Invitation to be an expert to evaluate the results.

Since Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English program at the Graduate School of Education, Siam University Thailand, works on a dissertation: "*The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China*", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit (the advisor) and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit (an co-advisor), the Graduate School of Education would like to invite you to be an expert to evaluate the results. Ms. Qin Honglei will contact and coordinate all details herself.

We really appreciate your help.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

Expert Invitation for the Translation of the Research Questionnaires:

SU 0210.04 / 037.01

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

19th December 2025

Dear Dr. Yao Yun,
Professor of English Literature, Shandong Normal University

Subject: Invitation to be an expert to verify the translation of the research questionnaires.

Since Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English program at the Graduate School of Education, Siam University Thailand, works on a dissertation: "*The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China*", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit (the advisor) and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit (an co-advisor), the Graduate School of Education would like to invite you to be an expert to verify the translation of the research questionnaires.

The research questionnaires are an essential tool for researchers to find answers. Ms. Qin Honglei conducted this research in English, the instrument was designed in English. However, it must be applied to Chinese respondents. Your role as an expert in verifying the translation of the research questionnaire from English into Chinese is of utmost importance for the success of this research. Then, Ms. Qin Honglei will contact and coordinate all details by herself.

We really appreciate your help.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

SU 0210.04 / 037

Graduate School of Education
Siam University
38 Phet Kasem Rd., Bang Wa,
Phasi Charoen, Bangkok 10160

19th December 2025

Dear Dr. Yu Caiyun,
Professor of English Literature, Shandong Vocational College of Science and Technology

Subject: Invitation to be an expert to verify the translation of the research questionnaires.

Since Ms. Qin Honglei, student ID 6319002020, a doctoral student in the English program at the Graduate School of Education, Siam University Thailand, works on a dissertation: "*The Investigation on the Effect of Caring Leadership Impact to Employee Well-being in Weifang Kindergarten School, China*", with Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit and Dr. Sarun Widtayakornbundit., the Graduate School of Education would like to invite you to be an expert to verify the translation of the research questionnaires.

The research questionnaires are an essential tool for researchers to find answers. Ms. Qin Honglei conducted this research in English, the instrument was designed in English. However, it must be applied to Chinese respondents. Your role as an expert in verifying the translation of the research questionnaire from English into Chinese is of utmost importance for the success of this research. Then, Ms. Qin Honglei will contact and coordinate all details by herself.

We really appreciate your help.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Emeritus Dr. Chanita Rukspollmuang
Dean of Graduate School of Education

REASEARCHER VITAE

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Address	**:** 38 Petkasem Road, Bangwa, Phasicharoen, Bangkok

Bachelor's Degree

Degree	**:** Bachelor of Education
Major	**:** Preschool Education
Institution	**:** Shandong Normal University
Country	**:** Jinan, Shandong Province, China
Year	**:** 2011

Master's Degree

Degree	**:** Master of Education
Major	**:** Preschool Education
Institution	**:** South West University
Country	**:** Chongqing, China
Year	**:** 2014

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