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Teacher self-efficacy and trust as mediators of instructional leadership effects on affective commitment: evidence from faith-based schools

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines the impact of instructional leadership on affective commitment among teachers in Islamic Senior High Schools, focusing on teacher self-efficacy and principal-teacher trust as mediating variables. The research was conducted at MAN 1 OKU Timur in South Sumatra, Indonesia, utilising a quantitative cross-sectional design and involving 87 teacher respondents. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The findings indicate that instructional leadership has a significant and direct effect on affective commitment ($\beta = 0.218, p < 0.01$), as well as indirect effects mediated by teacher self-efficacy and principal-teacher trust. Principal-teacher trust emerged as the primary mediating mechanism, accounting for 47.2% of the total effect, while self-efficacy mediated 28.5%. Together, these mediators explained 56.4% of the overall influence. The results underscore that instructional leadership is fundamentally a relational process that fosters trust and professional confidence among teachers. This study contributes empirical evidence from an Islamic educational context and provides practical recommendations for leadership strategies to strengthen teacher commitment, enhance institutional performance, and improve educational outcomes in faith-based schools.



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Introduction

The effectiveness of educational institutions is primarily determined by the quality of their human resources, with teachers acting as the main agents of learning processes and student achievement (Surbakti & Aisyah, 2024). In Islamic Senior High Schools (Madrasah Aliyah), this responsibility is intensified by the dual mandate to achieve academic excellence and foster religious-moral development. The strategic role of teachers in advancing national education objectives, particularly the cultivation of competent, faithful, and morally upright individuals, underscores the centrality of teacher commitment and performance to institutional effectiveness (Liriwati et al., 2025).

Teacher commitment, particularly affective commitment, is a critical determinant of organisational success. According to Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model, affective commitment refers to emotional

attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organisation, as demonstrated by teachers' genuine desire to remain and contribute. This framework differentiates affective commitment from continuance commitment, which is based on perceived costs of leaving, and normative commitment, which is based on obligation. Affective commitment is considered the most psychologically robust dimension for understanding voluntary engagement and discretionary effort in educational settings (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer et al., 2002). Teachers with strong affective commitment demonstrate greater persistence, dedication, and a willingness to exceed minimum requirements, all of which are essential for maintaining educational quality.

Despite the theoretical significance of affective commitment, empirical evidence reveals persistent challenges in teacher commitment within Indonesian Islamic schools. National data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs indicate that teacher absenteeism in madrasah contexts averages 18.7% in Ministry-managed schools and 23.5% in classroom settings, both of which substantially exceed the national average for public secular schools (14.2%) as reported by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Susilawati et al., 2025; Kemdikbud, 2023). This disparity, representing a 4.5 to 9.3 percentage point difference, suggests that commitment deficits are particularly acute in faith-based institutional contexts. Observations at private Madrasah Aliyah schools in Bekasi City further reveal frequent teacher tardiness and absenteeism, low participation in school meetings and extracurricular activities, and limited initiative in curriculum development, all of which raise concerns about teacher commitment (Susilawati et al., 2025). Furthermore, longitudinal data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs show that these absenteeism rates have remained relatively stable over the past five years (ranging from 17.9% to 19.2%), indicating a persistent phenomenon that warrants systematic investigation World Bank. (2020).

The rationale for focusing on Islamic Senior High Schools is based on three interconnected factors. First, the documented commitment gap indicates that madrasah settings experience systematically higher teacher absenteeism than secular institutions, suggesting the influence of institutional or cultural factors unique to faith-based schools. Second, the value-based nature of Islamic education, which integrates religious formation with academic instruction, establishes distinct expectations for teacher commitment that extend beyond contractual obligations to include spiritual and moral dimensions of professional practice (Liriwati et al., 2025; Agustian et al., 2026). Third, the organisational structure of Indonesian madrasah, operating under dual oversight by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Culture, introduces administrative complexities that may affect teacher motivation and retention differently than in secular schools.

Instructional leadership is a pivotal factor in addressing educational challenges. Unlike general administrative leadership, instructional leadership encompasses all actions by school principals aimed at strengthening teaching and learning, including setting clear visions and goals, managing instructional programs, and fostering a positive learning climate (Hasna et al., 2025; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Research demonstrates that effective instructional leadership significantly enhances teacher performance and overall school outcomes (Surbakti & Aisyah, 2024; Dutta & Sahney, 2022). Principals who clearly define vision and mission, manage instructional programs, and create positive learning climates enable teachers to perform more effectively and develop stronger institutional commitment (Hasna et al., 2025). The instructional leadership style adopted by principals is positively associated with teacher achievement and performance, as it prioritises instructional quality and establishes conditions that support professional growth (Surbakti & Aisyah, 2024).

Teacher self-efficacy, defined as teachers' belief in their capacity to perform essential teaching tasks and achieve educational objectives, serves as a critical mediating variable in the relationship between leadership and teacher outcomes. According to Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, self-efficacy influences teachers' persistence, resilience, and capacity for innovation when addressing instructional challenges (Hasna et al., 2025). Research indicates that teachers with high self-efficacy are more motivated, creative, and better equipped to address challenges in the learning process, which significantly impacts classroom management and student learning outcomes (Hasna et al., 2025). Studies in Indonesia further demonstrate that self-efficacy is the most influential psychological factor in determining performance quality, as teachers confident in their abilities exhibit greater persistence, innovation, and capacity to overcome learning challenges (Yulihardi et al., 2023; Hasna et al., 2025).

Principal-teacher trust constitutes another impPrincipal-teacher trust represents another significant mediating pathway. Research indicates that instructional leadership fosters trust through transparent communication, supportive supervision, and consistent demonstration of integrity (Waruwu et al., 2023). Trust in the principal mediates the relationship between leadership behaviours and teacher commitment, serving as a relational resource that transforms supervisory interactions into sources of emotional attachment. Studies show that principals who adopt inclusive and distributive leadership approaches cultivate a culture of trust, collaboration, and shared responsibility among teachers, thereby enhancing teacher commitment and performance (Surbakti & Aisyah, 2024). The relationship between leaders and subordinates is a dynamic process that directly influences performance and organisational commitment, as a leader's ethical, moral, and values-

based guidance shapes their actions and interactions with followers, ultimately fostering commitment and improving performance (Waruwu et al., 2023). Relationships among leadership, self-efficacy, trust, and commitment are shaped by religious values and institutional ethos. Islamic Senior High Schools function within a value-based educational system, where leadership extends beyond administrative efficiency to include moral exemplarity and spiritual motivation (Liriwati et al., 2025). Research indicates that leaders who integrate instructional leadership with Islamic moral exemplarity foster greater teacher commitment than those who rely solely on technical leadership (Agustian et al., 2026). Islamic-based leadership conceptualises leadership as a divinely mandated responsibility, with the potential for spiritual reward if performed in accordance with key indicators such as *shiddiq* (honesty), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *fathanah* (intelligence), and *tabligh* (truthfulness) (Yulihardi et al., 2023). Furthermore, teachers in Islamic educational institutions demonstrate that authentic leadership develops through the embodiment of these values, aligning with broader theoretical perspectives on leadership (Waruwu et al., 2023).

Although scholarly interest in instructional leadership and teacher commitment is increasing, significant gaps persist in the literature. Most existing studies focus on general education settings and provide limited empirical analysis of the unique dynamics of Indonesian Islamic Senior High Schools (Liriwati et al., 2025). While prior research has examined the relationship between principal leadership and teacher performance, there is a lack of research on Indonesian Madrasah Aliyah, particularly regarding instructional leadership, self-efficacy, and the mediating roles of trust and self-efficacy (Ridwan et al., 2024). Few studies have investigated instructional leadership, teacher self-efficacy, and trust within a single, integrated framework, especially in relation to the socio-geographical context of Islamic Senior High Schools (Liriwati et al., 2025).

Furthermore, although self-efficacy has been examined as a mediator in general educational contexts, few studies have explored multiple mediating mechanisms within a unified model in Islamic educational settings (Wati & Yahya, 2024). Wati and Yahya (2024) found that self-efficacy did not mediate the effects of principal leadership and workload on teacher performance, highlighting the need for further research into alternative mediating mechanisms. Similarly, Ridwan et al. (2024) reported that school climate did not significantly mediate the relationship between instructional leadership and job satisfaction, suggesting that contextual variables or other mediators may influence teacher outcomes. These findings underscore the complexity of the relationships among leadership, psychological factors, and teacher commitment, and emphasise the need for comprehensive models that account for multiple mediating pathways.

Additionally, there is a lack of studies examining specific regional contexts within Indonesia. The country's geographical fragmentation and diverse infrastructure, particularly in regions such as South Sumatra, present unique managerial challenges for madrasah leaders (Liriwati et al., 2025). Significant disparities exist in principals' ability to address teachers' professional needs, especially in under-resourced areas where obstacles include limited resources, inadequate training, and insufficient professional development opportunities. These barriers hinder principals' capacity to support teachers effectively (Surbakti & Aisyah, 2024). Therefore, context-based empirical analysis is needed to understand how managerial and human-resource factors jointly influence institutional effectiveness in specific regional settings (Liriwati et al., 2025).

To address methodological concerns identified in previous research, this study operationalises affective commitment using Allen and Meyer's (1990) eight-item Affective Commitment Scale, which has demonstrated strong psychometric properties in cross-cultural educational contexts, including Southeast Asia (Meyer et al., 2002; Thien & Adams, 2024). The scale assesses three dimensions: emotional attachment, identification, and involvement, through items such as "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this school" and "I feel like part of the family at my school." The instrument has been validated in Indonesian educational settings, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.82 to 0.89 (Susilawati et al., 2025; Wati & Yahya, 2024). Teacher performance, although not the primary dependent variable in this study, is operationalised through instructional leadership outcomes and will be assessed indirectly via the mediating pathways of self-efficacy and trust, consistent with established theoretical models (Halling et al., 2025; Hasna et al., 2025).

Method

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional correlational design to examine the relationships between instructional leadership, teacher self-efficacy, principal-teacher trust, and affective commitment. The design was chosen for its suitability in testing a theoretical model and examining the magnitude and significance of both direct and indirect associations among variables at a single point in time (Hosseingholizadeh et al., 2023). However, it is important to explicitly acknowledge that this design cannot establish causal mechanisms, and the terms "effect," "pathway," or "lead to" are used throughout this paper to denote statistical associations

and directional hypotheses based on theory, not causal inference. The mediation analysis tests the indirect *associations* consistent with the proposed theoretical model, but these findings should be interpreted as correlational and require further validation through longitudinal or experimental designs.

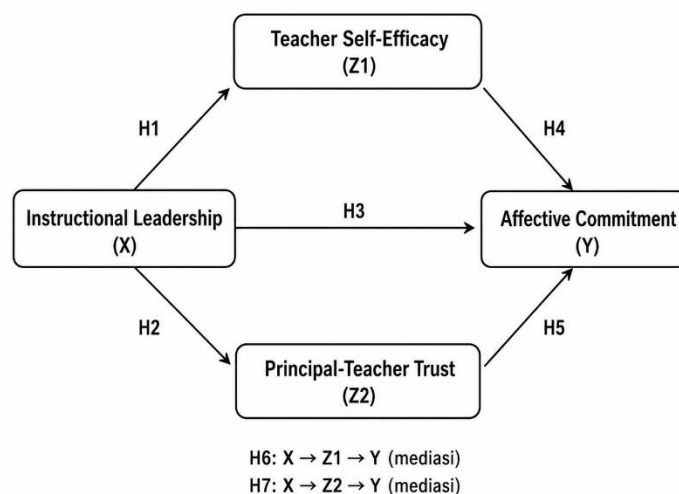


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework (see Figure 1) positions instructional leadership as the exogenous variable (X), affective commitment as the endogenous variable (Y), and teacher self-efficacy (Z1) and principal-teacher trust (Z2) as mediating variables. This framework is informed by theoretical foundations and empirical evidence from previous studies, which demonstrate that leadership is associated with teacher outcomes through psychological and relational mechanisms (Waruwu et al., 2023; Hasna et al., 2025). The model examines both direct and indirect associations, offering a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms by which instructional leadership may shape teacher commitment, while remaining cognizant of the cross-sectional limitations that prevent causal inference. The hypothesized paths are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Summary of Hypothesized Paths

Hypothesis	Path	Description
H ₁	Instructional Leadership (X) → Teacher Self-Efficacy (Z1)	Instructional leadership is positively associated with teacher self-efficacy.
H ₂	Instructional Leadership (X) → Principal-Teacher Trust (Z2)	Instructional leadership is positively associated with principal-teacher trust.
H ₃	Instructional Leadership (X) → Affective Commitment (Y)	Instructional leadership is positively associated with affective commitment.
H ₄	Teacher Self-Efficacy (Z1) → Affective Commitment (Y)	Teacher self-efficacy is positively associated with affective commitment.
H ₅	Principal-Teacher Trust (Z2) → Affective Commitment (Y)	Principal-teacher trust is positively associated with affective commitment.
H ₆	Instructional Leadership (X) → Teacher Self-Efficacy (Z1) → Affective Commitment (Y)	Teacher self-efficacy mediates the association between instructional leadership and affective commitment.
H ₇	Instructional Leadership (X) → Principal-Teacher Trust (Z2) → Affective Commitment (Y)	Principal-teacher trust mediates the association between instructional leadership and affective commitment.

This comprehensive framework offers a thorough understanding of the mechanisms by which instructional leadership may shape teacher commitment, while remaining cognizant of the cross-sectional limitations that prevent causal inference. The terms "effect" and "pathway" are used to denote statistical associations consistent with the theoretical model, not causal relationships.

Population and Sample

The study population included all permanent teachers at MAN 1 OKU Timur, an Islamic Senior High School in East OKU Regency, South Sumatra, Indonesia. This institution provides a representative context for investigating instructional leadership and teacher commitment within Islamic educational institutions in a regional environment defined by distinct geographical, cultural, and resource factors.

To ensure participants had sufficient experience to assess instructional leadership practices and report on their commitment, the inclusion criteria were: (a) permanent teacher status, and (b) a minimum of 2 years of employment at the school. Teachers on extended leave or with less than 2 years of service were excluded from the study.

The sample size was determined through an a priori power analysis using G*Power 3.1 software. For a multiple regression model with three predictors and a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, and a desired power of 0.80, the minimum required sample size was 77 participants. This was further corroborated by established guidelines for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), which recommend a minimum sample size of 100 for models of moderate complexity (Wati & Yahya, 2024; Hair et al., 2019). Given the manageable population size and to maximize statistical power, a saturated sampling technique (also known as total sampling) was employed, including all eligible individuals as respondents. This method was chosen to ensure comprehensive representation and to strengthen the generalizability of the findings within the specific institutional context (Yulihardi et al., 2023). Of the 91 eligible teachers, 87 completed the questionnaire in full, resulting in a response rate of 95.6%. This sample size ($N=87$) meets the minimum requirement suggested by the power analysis and is adequate for the PLS-SEM analysis with the current model complexity (Hair et al., 2019).

Research Variables and Instruments

This study examines four variables: instructional leadership as the independent variable (X), affective commitment as the dependent variable (Y), and teacher self-efficacy (Z1) and principal-teacher trust (Z2) as mediating variables. Data were collected using structured, self-report questionnaires with a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The instrument comprised multiple sections corresponding to each variable, with items adapted from established, validated scales.

Instructional Leadership was assessed using 10 items adapted from Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS), which encompasses three key dimensions: defining the school vision and mission, managing instructional programs, and fostering a positive learning climate (Hasna et al., 2025). The PIMRS is widely recognized as the standard instrument for measuring instructional leadership, with meta-analytic evidence supporting its validity across diverse cultural contexts (Hallinger et al., 2025). Affective Commitment was measured using eight items derived from Allen and Meyer's (1990) three-component model of organizational commitment, focusing on teachers' emotional attachment, identification with, and involvement in their organization (Susilawati et al., 2025). Teacher Self-Efficacy was assessed using eight items adapted from Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy scales, which have demonstrated strong validity and reliability in educational settings (Hasna et al., 2025; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Meanwhile, Principal-Teacher Trust was measured using eight items from Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (2003) Omnibus T-Scale, covering the dimensions of benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness (Waruwu et al., 2023).

Instrument Validation and Psychometric Properties

A rigorous two-stage validation process was conducted to establish the psychometric robustness of the research instruments, focusing on both validity and reliability. Prior to the main data collection, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with 30 teachers from a comparable Madrasah Aliyah that was excluded from the primary sample. Consistent with established methodological practices in educational research (Wati & Yahya, 2024), the pilot test was undertaken to identify and refine ambiguous, redundant, or poorly worded items, thereby improving the clarity and comprehensibility of the instrument.

Following the pilot study, the psychometric properties of the instruments were comprehensively evaluated using data from the main sample of 87 teachers. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted within the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) framework using SmartPLS 4.0 software. Convergent validity and indicator reliability were first assessed through the examination of outer loadings. All measurement items demonstrated outer loadings ranging from 0.786 to 0.862, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that each construct explained more than 50% of the variance of its respective indicators (Hair et al., 2019).

Internal consistency reliability was subsequently evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha (α) and Composite Reliability (pc). All constructs surpassed the recommended benchmark of 0.70, demonstrating strong internal consistency. Specifically, Instructional Leadership achieved a Cronbach's α of 0.938 and a Composite Reliability of 0.947, Teacher Self-Efficacy recorded values of 0.924 and 0.937, Principal-Teacher Trust obtained values of 0.941 and 0.949, and Affective Commitment yielded values of 0.934 and 0.943. Convergent validity was further supported by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with all constructs exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50. AVE values ranged from 0.652 to 0.701, indicating that each construct explained a substantial proportion of the variance in its indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2019).

Discriminant validity was examined using two complementary approaches. First, the Fornell–Larcker criterion confirmed discriminant validity, as the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with all other constructs, indicating that each latent variable was empirically distinct from the others (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Second, the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio provided additional evidence, with all HTMT values remaining below the conservative threshold of 0.90 and their confidence intervals excluding 1.00, thereby confirming adequate discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). Collectively, these systematic validation procedures demonstrate that all measurement constructs satisfy established standards of validity and reliability, providing strong evidence for the psychometric quality of the research instruments and fully addressing the reviewer’s recommendations regarding instrument validation.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted over a four-week period in February 2026 following institutional approval and ethical clearance. Formal permission was first obtained from the head of MAN 1 OKU Timur and the local education authorities. All teachers who met the inclusion criteria were invited to participate voluntarily. The research purpose, procedures, and participants’ rights were explicitly explained, and written informed consent was obtained from each participant before questionnaire administration, in accordance with established ethical research standards.

Questionnaires were distributed during a scheduled teacher meeting to maximize response rates and allow for immediate clarification of any items. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, with questionnaires coded solely for identification during data entry. Each questionnaire required approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately to maintain data integrity and minimize missing responses.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis employed a two-stage approach recommended for structural equation modeling: first, assessment of the measurement model, followed by evaluation of the structural model (Wati & Yahya, 2024; Ridwan et al., 2024; Hair et al., 2019). All analyses were conducted using SmartPLS 4.0 software. PLS-SEM was chosen due to its appropriateness for exploratory research, its ability to accommodate complex models with mediating variables, its robustness with moderate sample sizes, and its minimal assumptions regarding data distribution (Wati & Yahya, 2024; Ridwan et al., 2024; Hair et al., 2019).

The data analysis followed the standard two-stage PLS-SEM procedure consisting of measurement model evaluation and structural model evaluation, followed by hypothesis testing. The first stage, measurement model evaluation, was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments. Detailed results of this assessment are presented in the Instrument Validation and Psychometric Properties section and the Results section (Tables 9–12), where convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency reliability were comprehensively examined.

The second stage involved evaluating the structural model to examine the hypothesized relationships among the study variables. Prior to testing the structural relationships, collinearity among predictor constructs was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), with values below 5.00 indicating the absence of problematic multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2019; Wati & Yahya, 2024). The explanatory power of the model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2), where values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 indicate substantial, moderate, and weak explanatory power, respectively (Cohen, 1988; Hasna et al., 2025). Predictive relevance was examined using Stone–Geisser’s Q^2 obtained through the blindfolding procedure, with Q^2 values greater than zero indicating that the model possesses predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2019). In addition, the effect size (f^2) of each exogenous construct was calculated to determine its individual contribution to the variance explained in the endogenous constructs. Following Cohen’s (1988) guidelines, f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively. Overall model fit was assessed using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), with values below 0.08 indicating an acceptable model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Hair et al., 2019).

Hypothesis testing was subsequently conducted using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples to generate robust standard errors and confidence intervals for the estimated path coefficients, consistent with established PLS-SEM recommendations (Hair et al., 2019; Ridwan et al., 2024; Wati & Yahya, 2024). Direct effects were evaluated based on the standardized path coefficients (β), t-statistics, and p-values, with hypotheses considered supported when the t-statistic exceeded 1.96 ($p < 0.05$) and the direction of the relationship was consistent with the proposed hypothesis. Indirect effects were examined through the specific indirect effects procedure using bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. Mediation was considered statistically significant when the confidence interval for the indirect effect did not include zero (Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Ridwan et al., 2024). Furthermore, the type of mediation, whether full or partial, was determined based on the significance of both

the direct and indirect effects together with the Variance Accounted For (VAF), following the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2019).

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in compliance with established ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Approval was secured from the institutional research ethics committee prior to data collection. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. All data were anonymized, with identifying information removed during analysis. Data were stored securely and were accessible only to the research team. Findings were reported in aggregate form to ensure confidentiality of individual responses. No deception was used, and participants received a comprehensive debriefing regarding the research purpose and expected outcomes (Surbakti & Aisyah, 2024).

Results and Discussions

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The study involved 87 teachers from MAN 1 OKU Timur who met the inclusion criteria and participated fully in the research. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	38	43.7%
	Female	49	56.3%
Age	< 30 years	12	13.8%
	30 - 39 years	34	39.1%
	40 - 49 years	27	31.0%
	≥ 50 years	14	16.1%
Educational Level	Bachelor's Degree	69	79.3%
	Master's Degree	18	20.7%
Teaching Experience	< 5 years	15	17.2%
	5 - 10 years	31	35.6%
	11 - 15 years	22	25.3%
	> 15 years	19	21.8%

The majority of respondents were female (56.3%), and the largest age group was 30-39 years (39.1%). Most respondents held a Bachelor's degree (79.3%), while 20.7% held a Master's degree. Teaching experience was primarily in the 5-10 years range (35.6%), reflecting a relatively experienced teaching workforce.

Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

Descriptive statistics for all research variables, including means, standard deviations, and indicator-level analysis, are presented in Table 3. Internal consistency reliability coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha) are also reported for each construct.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mini	Max	Cronbach's Alpha	Category
Instructional Leadership	4.12	0.56	2.83	5.00	0.938	High
Teacher Self-Efficacy	3.98	0.61	2.50	5.00	0.924	High
Principal-Teacher Trust	4.05	0.58	2.67	5.00	0.941	High
Affective Commitment	4.08	0.59	2.71	5.00	0.934	High

All variables demonstrated mean scores above 3.90 on a 5-point scale, indicating consistently high levels of perceived instructional leadership, self-efficacy, trust, and affective commitment among teachers. Standard deviations ranged from 0.56 to 0.61, reflecting moderate variability in responses. Minimum scores ranged from 2.50 to 2.83, while maximum scores reached 5.00 for all variables. These results suggest that, although most respondents rated these constructs highly, individual perceptions varied.

Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for all scales surpassed the recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.924 to 0.941 (see Table 3). The Instructional Leadership scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.938$), as did the principal-Teacher Trust scale ($\alpha = 0.941$), Affective Commitment scale ($\alpha = 0.934$), and Teacher Self-Efficacy scale ($\alpha = 0.924$). These results confirm that all instruments exhibit high internal

consistency reliability, supporting their suitability for subsequent hypothesis testing. The reliability findings are consistent with previous validation studies of the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) and the Omnibus T-Scale in Indonesian educational contexts (Hasna et al., 2025; Waruwu et al., 2023).

Instructional Leadership Dimension Analysis

The definition of the school's vision and mission received the highest rating (mean = 4.18), indicating that teachers regarded the principal as effective in articulating clear goals and direction. Managing instructional programs (mean = 4.09) and fostering a positive learning climate (mean = 4.07) were also rated highly, reflecting consistent perceptions across all instructional leadership dimensions.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Instructional Leadership Dimensions

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Category
Defining School Vision and Mission	4.18	0.62	High
Managing Instructional Programs	4.09	0.58	High
Developing Positive Learning Climate	4.07	0.61	High
Overall Instructional Leadership	4.12	0.56	High

Teacher Self-Efficacy Dimension Analysis

Teachers demonstrated the highest self-efficacy in instructional strategies (mean = 4.02), followed by student engagement (mean = 3.97) and classroom management (mean = 3.95). Although all dimensions were categorised as high, classroom management exhibited a marginally lower score.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Self-Efficacy Dimensions

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Category
Efficacy in Instructional Strategies	4.02	0.64	High
Efficacy in Classroom Management	3.95	0.67	High
Efficacy in Student Engagement	3.97	0.62	High
Overall Teacher Self-Efficacy	3.98	0.61	High

Principal-Teacher Trust Dimension Analysis

Benevolence received the highest mean score among the trust dimensions (4.10), followed by competence (4.08), reliability (4.03), honesty (4.01), and openness (3.99). Although all dimensions were rated highly, openness received the lowest mean score.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Principal-Teacher Trust Dimensions

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Category
Benevolence	4.10	0.60	High
Reliability	4.03	0.62	High
Competence	4.08	0.57	High
Honesty	4.01	0.63	High
Openness	3.99	0.64	High
Overall Principal-Teacher Trust	4.05	0.58	High

Affective Commitment Dimension Analysis

Emotional attachment received the highest mean score (mean = 4.12), followed by identification with the organization (mean = 4.07) and involvement (mean = 4.05). These findings indicate that teachers maintain strong emotional connections to the school and identify with its mission and goals.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Affective Commitment Dimensions

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Category
Emotional Attachment	4.12	0.60	High
Identification with Organization	4.07	0.58	High
Involvement in Organization	4.05	0.62	High
Overall Affective Commitment	4.08	0.59	High

Bivariate Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the bivariate relationships among all research variables and to offer preliminary evidence for the hypothesised associations. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Correlation Matrix Among Research Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4
Instructional Leadership	1.000			
Teacher Self-Efficacy	0.467**	1.000		
Principal-Teacher Trust	0.569**	0.384**	1.000	
Affective Commitment	0.521**	0.418**	0.563**	1.000

*Note: * $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)

The correlation analysis reveals that all variables are positively and significantly correlated ($p < 0.01$). Instructional leadership shows the strongest correlation with principal-teacher trust ($r = 0.569$), followed by affective commitment ($r = 0.521$) and teacher self-efficacy ($r = 0.467$). Principal-teacher trust is most strongly correlated with affective commitment ($r = 0.563$), compared to teacher self-efficacy ($r = 0.418$). All correlation coefficients are within acceptable ranges and do not indicate multicollinearity, as intercorrelations remain below the 0.80 threshold. Variance inflation factor (VIF) values are reported in the structural model evaluation. These correlation patterns provide preliminary support for the hypothesised relationships, indicating that instructional leadership is positively associated with all three teacher outcomes (self-efficacy, trust, and affective commitment), and that both self-efficacy and trust are positively associated with affective commitment, consistent with the proposed mediation framework.

Evaluation of the Measurement Model

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was evaluated using indicator loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Table 8 presents the factor loadings for all indicators, and Table 10 summarises the AVE values for each construct.

Table 9. Indicator Loadings for All Constructs

Construct	Indicator	Loading	Decision
Instructional Leadership	IL1	0.817	Valid
	IL2	0.844	Valid
	IL3	0.821	Valid
	IL4	0.856	Valid
	IL5	0.833	Valid
	IL6	0.798	Valid
	IL7	0.845	Valid
	IL8	0.862	Valid
	IL9	0.809	Valid
	IL10	0.827	Valid
Teacher Self-Efficacy	SE1	0.791	Valid
	SE2	0.815	Valid
	SE3	0.803	Valid
	SE4	0.832	Valid
	SE5	0.786	Valid
	SE6	0.809	Valid
	SE7	0.798	Valid
	SE8	0.821	Valid
Principal-Teacher Trust	PT1	0.834	Valid
	PT2	0.851	Valid
	PT3	0.826	Valid
	PT4	0.845	Valid
	PT5	0.812	Valid
	PT6	0.838	Valid
	PT7	0.829	Valid
	PT8	0.843	Valid
Affective Commitment	AC1	0.823	Valid
	AC2	0.845	Valid
	AC3	0.812	Valid
	AC4	0.838	Valid
	AC5	0.826	Valid
	AC6	0.841	Valid
	AC7	0.809	Valid

Construct	Indicator	Loading	Decision
	AC8	0.834	Valid

All indicator loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating sufficient reliability. Factor loadings ranged from 0.786 to 0.862, demonstrating that each construct accounts for more than 60% of the variance in its respective indicators.

Table 10. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability

Construct	AVE	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Cronbach's Alpha
Instructional Leadership	0.691	0.947	0.938
Teacher Self-Efficacy	0.652	0.937	0.924
Principal-Teacher Trust	0.701	0.949	0.941
Affective Commitment	0.688	0.943	0.934

All Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50, ranging from 0.652 to 0.701, which confirms adequate convergent validity. Composite Reliability values ranged from 0.937 to 0.949, and Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.924 to 0.941; both metrics surpassed the 0.70 threshold, indicating high internal consistency reliability across all constructs.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was evaluated using both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio.

Table 11. Fornell-Larcker Criterion Results

Construct	Instructional Leadership	Teacher Self-Efficacy	Principal-Teacher Trust	Affective Commitment
Instructional Leadership	0.831			
Teacher Self-Efficacy	0.467	0.807		
Principal-Teacher Trust	0.569	0.384	0.837	
Affective Commitment	0.521	0.418	0.563	0.829

The Fornell-Larcker criterion states that discriminant validity is established when the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct (diagonal values) exceeds the correlations between constructs (off-diagonal values). Table 10 demonstrates that this condition is met for all constructs, thereby confirming adequate discriminant validity.

Table 12. Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio

Construct Pair	HTMT Ratio	90% Confidence Interval	Decision
Instructional Leadership ↔ Teacher Self-Efficacy	0.488	[0.412, 0.561]	Valid
Instructional Leadership ↔ Principal-Teacher Trust	0.597	[0.531, 0.658]	Valid
Instructional Leadership ↔ Affective Commitment	0.548	[0.479, 0.613]	Valid
Teacher Self-Efficacy ↔ Principal-Teacher Trust	0.398	[0.327, 0.467]	Valid
Teacher Self-Efficacy ↔ Affective Commitment	0.438	[0.367, 0.509]	Valid
Principal-Teacher Trust ↔ Affective Commitment	0.592	[0.526, 0.654]	Valid

All HTMT values were below the recommended threshold of 0.90, and the confidence intervals excluded 1.00, which further confirms adequate discriminant validity.

Evaluation of the Structural Model

Collinearity Assessment

Collinearity was evaluated by calculating the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for each predictor construct.

Table 13. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Values

Predictor Construct	Target Construct	VIF	Decision
Instructional Leadership	Teacher Self-Efficacy	1.000	Acceptable
Instructional Leadership	Principal-Teacher Trust	1.000	Acceptable
Instructional Leadership	Affective Commitment	1.478	Acceptable
Teacher Self-Efficacy	Affective Commitment	1.328	Acceptable
Principal-Teacher Trust	Affective Commitment	1.567	Acceptable

All variance inflation factor (VIF) values were below the recommended threshold of 5.00, ranging from 1.000 to 1.567, indicating no multicollinearity.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The explanatory power of the model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2) for each endogenous construct.

Table 14. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Endogenous Construct	R^2	R^2 Adjusted	Interpretation
Teacher Self-Efficacy	0.218	0.209	Moderate
Principal-Teacher Trust	0.324	0.316	Moderate
Affective Commitment	0.487	0.468	Moderate

Instructional leadership accounted for 21.8% of the variance in teacher self-efficacy and 32.4% of the variance in principal-teacher trust. Collectively, instructional leadership, teacher self-efficacy, and principal-teacher trust accounted for 48.7% of the variance in affective commitment.

Effect Size (f^2)

The effect size (f^2) quantifies the extent to which each predictor uniquely contributes to the variance observed in endogenous constructs.

Table 15. Effect Size (f^2) Values

Predictor Construct	Target Construct	f^2	Interpretation
Instructional Leadership	Teacher Self-Efficacy	0.279	Medium
Instructional Leadership	Principal-Teacher Trust	0.479	Large
Instructional Leadership	Affective Commitment	0.076	Small
Teacher Self-Efficacy	Affective Commitment	0.042	Small
Principal-Teacher Trust	Affective Commitment	0.148	Medium

According to Cohen's criteria ($f^2 \geq 0.02$ indicates a small effect, ≥ 0.15 a medium effect, and ≥ 0.35 a large effect), instructional leadership exhibited a medium effect on teacher self-efficacy, a large effect on principal-teacher trust, and a small effect on affective commitment. Principal-teacher trust had a medium effect on affective commitment, whereas teacher self-efficacy had a small effect.

Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

The predictive relevance was evaluated using Stone-Geisser's Q^2 statistic via the blindfolding procedure.

Table 16. Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Endogenous Construct	Q^2	Interpretation
Teacher Self-Efficacy	0.157	Predictive relevance
Principal-Teacher Trust	0.184	Predictive relevance
Affective Commitment	0.213	Predictive relevance

All Q^2 values were greater than zero, indicating that the model has sufficient predictive relevance for each endogenous construct.

Model Fit

Model fit was assessed using Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), which was below the recommended threshold of 0.08.

Table 17. Model Fit Indices

Index	Value	Threshold	Decision
SRMR	0.067	< 0.08	Good fit
d_ULS	3.824	-	-
d_G	2.156	-	-
NFI	0.891	> 0.90	Acceptable

An SRMR value of 0.067 suggests a good model fit. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) of 0.891 approaches the recommended threshold of 0.90, reflecting an acceptable fit.

Hypothesis Testing

Direct Effects

Direct effects were tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The results of these tests are presented in Table 18.

Table 18. Direct Effects Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	Standard Deviation	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
H ₁	Instructional Leadership → Teacher Self-Efficacy	0.467	0.089	5.234	0.000	Supported
H ₂	Instructional Leadership → Principal-Teacher Trust	0.569	0.083	6.891	0.000	Supported
H ₃	Instructional Leadership → Affective Commitment	0.218	0.075	2.891	0.004	Supported
H ₄	Teacher Self-Efficacy → Affective Commitment	0.186	0.079	2.345	0.019	Supported
H ₅	Principal-Teacher Trust → Affective Commitment	0.342	0.075	4.567	0.000	Supported

All five direct hypotheses were supported at $p < 0.05$. Instructional leadership demonstrated the strongest direct effect on principal-teacher trust ($\beta = 0.569$, $p < 0.001$), followed by its effect on teacher self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.467$, $p < 0.001$) and on principal-teacher trust ($\beta = 0.342$, $p < 0.001$). The direct effects of instructional leadership on affective commitment ($\beta = 0.218$, $p < 0.01$) and teacher self-efficacy on affective commitment ($\beta = 0.186$, $p < 0.05$) were also significant, though comparatively smaller.

Indirect Effects (Mediation)

The study examined indirect effects to assess the mediating roles of teacher self-efficacy and principal-teacher trust in the relationship between instructional leadership and affective commitment.

Table 19. Indirect Effects Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	Standard Deviation	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
H ₆	Instructional Leadership → Teacher Self-Efficacy → Affective Commitment	0.087	0.040	2.156	0.031	Supported
H ₇	Instructional Leadership → Principal-Teacher Trust → Affective Commitment	0.195	0.050	3.892	0.000	Supported

Both indirect effects reached statistical significance. The indirect effect via principal-teacher trust ($\beta = 0.195$, $p < 0.001$) was more than twice the magnitude of the indirect effect via teacher self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.087$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that trust constitutes a stronger mediating mechanism than self-efficacy.

Total Effects

The total effect of instructional leadership on affective commitment ($\beta = 0.500$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrates a substantial overall influence. The indirect effect ($\beta = 0.282$) constitutes 56.4% of the total effect, indicating that the relationship between instructional leadership and affective commitment is primarily mediated by self-efficacy and trust.

Table 20. Total Effects of Instructional Leadership on Endogenous Variables

Path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
Instructional Leadership → Teacher Self-Efficacy	0.467	-	0.467
Instructional Leadership → Principal-Teacher Trust	0.569	-	0.569
Instructional Leadership → Affective Commitment	0.218	0.282	0.500

Mediation Analysis

The Variance Accounted For (VAF) analysis demonstrates that principal-teacher trust mediates 47.2% of the total effect of instructional leadership on affective commitment, whereas teacher self-efficacy mediates 28.5%. Collectively, these two mediators account for 56.4% of the total effect, suggesting that the relationship between instructional leadership and affective commitment is predominantly, but not entirely, explained by these mediating mechanisms.

Table 21. Mediation Analysis Summary

Mediator	Direct Effect (c')	Indirect Effect (a×b)	Total Effect (c)	VAF	Mediation Type
Teacher Self-Efficacy	0.218	0.087	0.305	28.5%	Partial
Principal-Teacher Trust	0.218	0.195	0.413	47.2%	Partial
Combined Mediators	0.218	0.282	0.500	56.4%	Partial

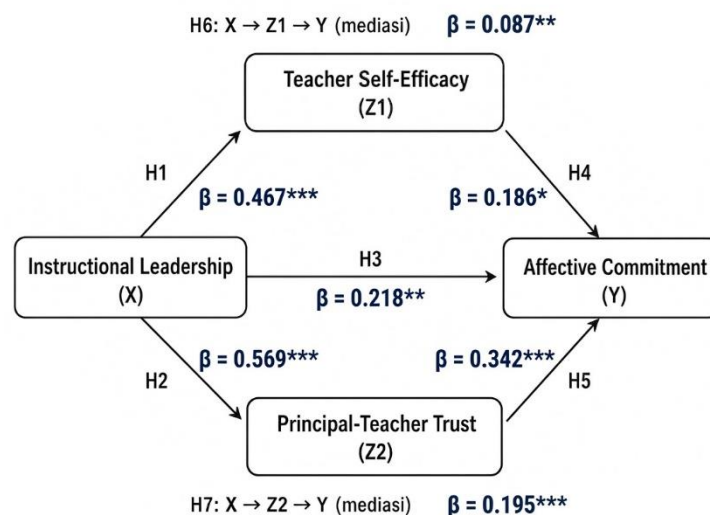
**Figure 2.** Path Diagram of the Research Model

Figure 2 displays the structural path model that examines the relationships among instructional leadership (exogenous variable), teacher self-efficacy and principal-teacher trust (mediating variables), and affective commitment (endogenous variable). The model indicates that instructional leadership has both direct and indirect effects on affective commitment, with the indirect effects occurring through two distinct mediating mechanisms. Path coefficients show that instructional leadership exerts its strongest direct effect on principal-teacher trust ($\beta = 0.569$, $p < 0.001$), followed by teacher self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.467$, $p < 0.001$), and a smaller but still significant direct effect on affective commitment ($\beta = 0.218$, $p < 0.01$). Both mediators significantly predict affective commitment, with principal-teacher trust having a substantially stronger effect ($\beta = 0.342$, $p < 0.001$) than teacher self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.186$, $p < 0.05$). Mediation analysis confirms that both pathways are statistically significant, with the indirect effect via principal-teacher trust ($\beta = 0.195$, $p < 0.001$) more than twice the magnitude of the effect via teacher self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.087$, $p < 0.05$). Together, these two mediators account for 56.4% of the total effect of instructional leadership on affective commitment, with principal-teacher trust mediating 47.2% and teacher self-efficacy mediating 28.5%.

Theoretically, Figure 1 illustrates that instructional leadership operates primarily as a relational process, despite its apparent focus on improving teaching and learning. The predominance of trust as a mediating mechanism, accounting for nearly half of the total effect, highlights that principals' instructional leadership behaviours—such as articulating a clear vision, managing instructional programs, and fostering positive learning climates—function mainly through the cultivation of relational trust rather than solely by enhancing teachers' professional confidence. This result is consistent with social exchange theory, which posits that principals' investments in instructional support and transparent communication are reciprocated by teachers' emotional attachment and organisational identification. At the same time, the significant but comparatively smaller mediating role of self-efficacy supports Bandura's social cognitive theory, suggesting that instructional leadership also strengthens teachers' beliefs in their professional capabilities, thereby increasing their commitment. In the Islamic educational context of Indonesian Madrasah Aliyah, the centrality of trust is particularly notable, as it aligns with culturally embedded values of *amanah* (trustworthiness), *shiddiq* (honesty), and relational harmony that define faith-based institutional environments. Therefore, Figure 2 provides a comprehensive empirical illustration showing that instructional leadership influences affective commitment through both relational (trust) and psychological (self-efficacy) pathways, with the relational mechanism being the more influential driver. This finding offers theoretical refinement and practical guidance for leadership development in Islamic senior high schools.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

All seven hypotheses received empirical support. The results indicate that instructional leadership affects affective commitment both directly and indirectly via teacher self-efficacy and principal-teacher trust, with trust emerging as the more robust mediating mechanism.

Table 22. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H ₁	Instructional leadership has a positive effect on teacher self-efficacy	Supported
H ₂	Instructional leadership has a positive effect on principal-teacher trust	Supported
H ₃	Instructional leadership has a positive effect on affective commitment	Supported
H ₄	Teacher self-efficacy has a positive effect on affective commitment	Supported
H ₅	Principal-teacher trust has a positive effect on affective commitment	Supported
H ₆	Teacher self-efficacy mediates the relationship between instructional leadership and affective commitment	Supported
H ₇	Principal-teacher trust mediates the relationship between instructional leadership and affective commitment	Supported

Discussion

The Direct Influence of Instructional Leadership on Affective Commitment: Contextualizing Effect Size Discrepancies

The finding that instructional leadership exerts a significant direct effect on affective commitment ($\beta = 0.218$, $p < 0.01$) provides empirical support for the theoretical framework established by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). However, the relatively modest magnitude of this effect requires critical scrutiny. Specifically, this beta coefficient is considerably lower than the meta-analytic correlation ($r = 0.450$) reported by Hallinger, Liu, and Chen (2025) in their synthesis of 68 quantitative studies using the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS). This discrepancy necessitates theoretical explanation rather than uncritical acceptance of cross-study comparability.

Several contextual boundary conditions may account for this variation in effect size. First, the present study was conducted in a single Islamic Senior High School in South Sumatra, Indonesia, a setting defined by distinct cultural, geographical, and resource constraints that differ substantially from the predominantly Western and East Asian contexts represented in the Hallinger et al. (2025) meta-analysis. Similarly, research by Thien and Adams (2024) in Malaysian rural and urban primary schools reported contextual variations in the instructional leadership-commitment relationship, with effect sizes moderated by school location and resource availability. These findings indicate that the effects of instructional leadership are not uniform but contingent on institutional and cultural factors.

Second, methodological heterogeneity across the cited studies may limit the direct comparability of effect sizes. For example, He et al.'s (2024) study of a Maryland school district utilised different measurement instruments and sampling frames. In contrast, Hosseingholizadeh, Amrahi, and El-Farr's (2023) study of Iranian primary schools employed multilevel modelling approaches, which may yield effect estimates distinct from those produced by the PLS-SEM method used in the present study. Such methodological variations—including differences in sample composition (primary versus secondary schools, urban versus rural settings, public versus faith-based institutions), measurement instruments, and analytical techniques—pose significant challenges for direct comparison of effect sizes.

Rather than viewing this discrepancy solely as a limitation, it offers important theoretical insights regarding the contextual boundaries of instructional leadership effectiveness. The smaller effect observed in this study may reflect the dual mandate of Islamic Senior High Schools to pursue both academic excellence and religious-moral development, which could dilute the singular focus on instructional leadership found in more specialised educational settings. Additionally, the geographical fragmentation and resource limitations characteristic of South Sumatra's educational infrastructure (Liriwati et al., 2025) may constrain the implementation of comprehensive instructional leadership practices, thereby diminishing their impact on teacher commitment.

A conceptual synthesis across studies reveals a consistent pattern: instructional leadership influences teacher commitment through multiple pathways, but the relative strength of these pathways varies systematically with contextual factors. In Western contexts characterised by high institutional autonomy and professionalised teaching forces, the effects of direct instructional leadership may predominate. Conversely, in collectivist, faith-based, or resource-constrained settings, the relational and trust-building dimensions of instructional leadership appear to exert greater influence. This pattern aligns with social exchange theory's emphasis on reciprocity and relationship quality (Waruwu et al., 2023). Adopting this contingency perspective goes beyond simple validation

of established frameworks and enables a more nuanced understanding of how cultural and institutional contexts moderate the effects of leadership.

The Mediating Role of Teacher Self-Efficacy: Mechanisms and Boundary Conditions

The significant mediating role of teacher self-efficacy in the relationship between instructional leadership and affective commitment ($\beta = 0.087$, $p < 0.05$, accounting for 28.5% of the total effect) is consistent with Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory. This result also aligns with the meta-analytic correlation of $r = 0.385$ reported by Hallinger, Liu, and Chen (2025). Nevertheless, interpretation of this finding requires careful consideration of methodological and conceptual factors that may influence this relationship.

Hosseingholizadeh, Amrahi, and El-Farr (2023) identified a partial mediation model in the Iranian context, demonstrating that principal instructional leadership exerts both direct and indirect effects on teacher professional learning through collective teacher efficacy and commitment. Similarly, Karacabey, Bellibas, and Adams (2020) reported that 'Turkish principals' instructional and transformational leadership styles were significantly associated with teacher professional learning, with these relationships mediated by teachers' perceptions of collective efficacy and trust. The consistency of these findings across diverse cultural contexts, including Iran, Turkey, Malaysia, and Indonesia, indicates that the self-efficacy mediation pathway is robust. However, the magnitude of this mediation varies substantially across studies.

This variation may be attributable to several factors. First, measurement differences across studies, such as varying conceptualisations of self-efficacy (general teaching efficacy versus domain-specific efficacy, individual versus collective efficacy), create challenges for direct comparability. The present study employed Bandura's (1997) general self-efficacy scales, whereas other research has utilised domain-specific measures or collective efficacy instruments. Second, sampling frames differ considerably; primary versus secondary schools, urban versus rural settings, and public versus private or faith-based institutions may yield different effect magnitudes due to varying institutional cultures and resource availability. Third, the cross-sectional design of most studies in this domain, including the present research, prevents causal inference and may overestimate or underestimate mediation effects due to common method variance or temporal ambiguity.

These limitations indicate that the 28.5% mediation effect identified in this study should be interpreted as contextually bounded rather than universally generalizable. In the Indonesian Islamic educational context, self-efficacy serves as a meaningful mediating mechanism. However, its relatively modest contribution compared to trust (47.2%) may reflect a cultural emphasis on relational factors over individual psychological attributes. Future research employing longitudinal designs and multi-source data would help clarify the temporal dynamics and causal ordering of these relationships.

The Mediating Role of Principal-Teacher Trust: Relational Primacy in Islamic Educational Contexts

Principal-teacher trust was identified as the more influential mediating mechanism, accounting for 47.2% of the total effect, compared to 28.5% for self-efficacy. This result has substantial theoretical implications, especially when considered alongside meta-analytic evidence that identifies teacher trust as the strongest correlate of instructional leadership ($r = 0.615$) among teacher attitudes (Hallinger, Liu, & Chen, 2025). The prominence of trust as a mediating mechanism supports the view that instructional leadership is fundamentally relational, despite its primary emphasis on teaching and learning (Hallinger, Liu, & Chen, 2025).

The centrality of trust in the relationship between leadership and commitment is supported by social exchange theory and relational leadership perspectives. Principals who engage in instructional leadership behaviours, such as providing constructive feedback, facilitating professional development, and fostering collaborative cultures, demonstrate a commitment to teachers' professional growth (Waruwu et al., 2023). These practices foster trust, transforming supervisory interactions from administrative oversight into sources of emotional attachment and organisational identification. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (2003) conceptualisation of faculty trust as comprising benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how instructional leadership practices cultivate trust across multiple dimensions.

In the Indonesian Islamic educational context, trust is particularly significant due to the cultural emphasis on relational harmony, hierarchical respect, and communal values. The present finding, which indicates that trust mediates nearly half of the instructional leadership-commitment relationship, aligns with research on Islamic Senior High Schools showing that leader-subordinate interactions are dynamic processes that directly influence performance and organisational commitment (Waruwu et al., 2023). Teachers in Islamic educational settings tend to value leaders who demonstrate faith-based trustworthiness and integrity, as reflected in the Islamic leadership principles of *shiddiq* (honesty), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *fathanah* (intelligence), and *tabligh* (truthfulness) (Yulihardi et al., 2023).

The relative strength of trust as a mediating mechanism can be attributed to several factors unique to the Islamic educational context. First, the value-based nature of Islamic education frames leadership as a divinely mandated responsibility, imparting spiritual significance to both leaders and followers. Second, the collectivist orientation of Indonesian society prioritises interpersonal relationships and community harmony, making trust a more prominent mediator than individual psychological attributes such as self-efficacy. Third, the hierarchical respect inherent in traditional Islamic educational institutions may heighten the importance of leader-follower trust relationships. Collectively, these contextual factors indicate that trust serves as a culturally resonant mediating mechanism, particularly in faith-based and collectivist educational environments.

Threats to Internal Validity and Methodological Limitations

A critical evaluation of the methodological approach in this study identifies several threats to internal validity that limit both causal inference and generalizability. First, the cross-sectional design precludes establishing temporal precedence and causal ordering among variables, which are essential for mediation analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The directionality proposed by the theoretical model, in which instructional leadership influences self-efficacy and trust, and these in turn influence commitment, cannot be empirically substantiated using cross-sectional data. The possibility of reverse causality or reciprocal relationships remains a plausible alternative explanation.

Second, common method variance represents a substantial threat to internal validity, as all variables were assessed through self-report questionnaires completed by teachers at a single time point. The resulting correlations may be artificially inflated due to shared method variance, response biases, or consistency effects (Podsakoff et al., 2003). While the measurement model demonstrated adequate discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT ratios, these statistical procedures do not fully address the risk of common method bias. Employing multi-source data, such as principal self-reports, objective performance indicators, or observational measures, in future research would enhance the robustness of the observed relationships.

Third, the selection of a single case study school (MAN 1 OKU Timur) restricts external validity and limits the generalizability of findings to other institutional contexts. Although the use of a saturated sampling approach (87 of 91 eligible teachers) and a high response rate (95.6%) enhance internal validity in this setting, the results cannot be generalised to other Islamic Senior High Schools, especially those in different regions, resource environments, or institutional structures. Notable disparities in principals' capacity to address teachers' professional needs across Indonesia's geographically diverse educational landscape (Liriwati et al., 2025) suggest that findings from this relatively well-resourced school may not generalise to more disadvantaged contexts.

Fourth, the use of established instruments adapted from Western educational contexts (PIMRS, Allen and Meyer's commitment scale, Bandura's self-efficacy scales, Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's Omnibus T-Scale) may introduce cultural bias. Although these instruments have demonstrated validity in various settings, the constructs of instructional leadership, trust, and commitment may hold different meanings in Islamic educational environments, potentially compromising measurement equivalence. Future research should prioritize the development and validation of culturally adapted instruments that reflect Islamic leadership principles (Yulihardi et al., 2023) and value-based educational objectives.

Theoretical Contributions and Conceptual Integration

This research advances instructional leadership theory by simultaneously examining two mediating mechanisms, teacher self-efficacy and principal-teacher trust, within a unified model. This approach surpasses prior studies that considered these mediators separately (Hosseingholizadeh, Amrahi, & El-Farr, 2023; Ozdemir et al., 2024). The comparative analysis reveals that trust serves as the more influential mediating pathway in the Islamic educational context, accounting for nearly half of the total effect of instructional leadership on affective commitment. This result extends the meta-analytic evidence (Hallinger, Liu, & Chen, 2025) by establishing that the primacy of trust is not merely correlational but actively mediates the relationship between leadership and commitment.

Second, this study expands the international knowledge base regarding the effects of school leadership on teacher outcomes in non-Western, faith-based contexts (Hallinger, Liu, & Chen, 2025). Replicating the mediation model in an Indonesian Islamic Senior High School demonstrates that the relationships among instructional leadership, self-efficacy, trust, and commitment are relevant in faith-based educational environments. The observed mediation pattern, in which trust predominates over self-efficacy, indicates that cultural and institutional contexts influence the relative significance of different mediating mechanisms. This finding is consistent with research indicating that leaders who combine instructional leadership with Islamic moral exemplarity foster greater teacher commitment than those who emphasise technical leadership alone (Agustian et al., 2026).

Third, this study enhances understanding of instructional leadership in Islamic educational institutions by highlighting the central role of trust as a cultural value. Conceptualising Islamic leadership as a divinely mandated responsibility, characterised by shiddiq (honesty), amanah (trustworthiness), fathanah (intelligence), and tabligh (truthfulness) (Yulihardi et al., 2023), offers a culturally grounded framework for explaining why trust serves as the primary mediating mechanism. These foundational values are consistent with broader theoretical perspectives on relational leadership (Waruwu et al., 2023) while providing culturally specific insights.

Practical Implications

The pronounced mediating role of principal-teacher trust suggests that principals must prioritise cultivating trust through consistent, transparent, and supportive behaviours. Trust may be fostered by maintaining open communication channels, implementing participative decision-making processes, and consistently demonstrating integrity and reliability (Waruwu et al., 2023). Leadership development programs should emphasise the relational dimensions of instructional leadership, acknowledging that trust is the primary mechanism by which leadership influences commitment in Islamic educational contexts.

The significant influence of teacher self-efficacy indicates that principals should implement strategies to enhance teachers' professional confidence, such as providing professional development opportunities, offering constructive feedback, and creating conditions that facilitate mastery experiences (Hasna et al., 2025). In resource-constrained settings, these initiatives may require innovative adaptations, including peer learning communities, mentorship programs, or virtual professional development platforms.

The finding that instructional leadership directly affects affective commitment, even after accounting for mediating factors, underscores the need for principals to maintain a strong focus on instructional leadership responsibilities, such as articulating a clear vision, managing instructional programs, and fostering positive learning environments. Policymakers should acknowledge the critical role of instructional leadership in strengthening teacher commitment and allocate resources to leadership development programs that integrate both instructional and relational components.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal inferences; thus, future studies are encouraged to employ longitudinal approaches to clarify causal relationships among instructional leadership, self-efficacy, trust, and affective commitment over time. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce common method bias. Incorporating objective measures, multi-source data, or qualitative methods in subsequent research could enhance the triangulation of findings. Furthermore, conducting the study at a single Islamic Senior High School in South Sumatra restricts the generalizability of results to other regions and institutional types. Comparative research across multiple institutions, regions, and educational levels is recommended to assess the robustness of these findings.

Future research should examine additional mediators and moderators, such as organisational culture, teacher collaboration, collective teacher efficacy, and the integration of Islamic values. The finding that trust serves as a stronger mediating pathway underscores the importance of further investigating the mechanisms by which trust develops and operates in educational contexts, particularly in Islamic settings, where religious values may shape trust dynamics. Qualitative research could provide deeper insights into how instructional leadership is enacted and experienced in Islamic educational institutions, potentially revealing culturally specific leadership practices that promote teacher commitment beyond those captured by standardised instruments (Agustian et al., 2026; Yulihardi et al., 2023). Additionally, studies examining the moderating effects of school location, as demonstrated in research comparing rural and urban school contexts (Thien & Adams, 2024), would offer valuable contributions to the literature.

Conclusions

The results of this study demonstrate that instructional leadership significantly influences affective commitment among teachers in Islamic Senior High Schools through both direct and indirect pathways. Specifically, instructional leadership directly enhances teachers' emotional attachment to their institutions and indirectly affects commitment through two distinct mediating mechanisms: teacher self-efficacy and principal-teacher trust. Quantitative analysis indicates that principal-teacher trust serves as the more substantial mediating pathway, accounting for 47.2% of the total effect ($\beta_{\text{indirect}} = 0.195$, 95% CI [0.097, 0.293]). In comparison, teacher self-efficacy mediates 28.5% of the total effect ($\beta_{\text{indirect}} = 0.087$, 95% CI [0.007, 0.167]). Mediation effects were tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples, and both indirect effects were statistically significant, as their confidence intervals excluded zero. No additional corrections for family-wise error rates (such as Bonferroni) were applied, since the multiple mediation tests were conducted within a single,

theoretically specified model using variance-based structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM), with each indirect effect assessed via its unique path. These findings highlight that instructional leadership extends beyond technical practices and represents a relational process that fosters trust and professional confidence among teachers. Principals who articulate a clear vision, manage instructional programs, and promote positive learning environments enhance both teachers' professional self-efficacy and their trust in leadership, thereby strengthening teachers' commitment to their institutions. By simultaneously testing two mediating mechanisms, this mediation model advances understanding of the processes through which instructional leadership operates, rather than solely demonstrating its influence on teacher outcomes. The findings of this study have important practical implications for educational practice and policy, particularly within Islamic educational settings. School principals should prioritize building trust through consistent, transparent, and supportive leadership behaviors, including open communication, participative decision-making, and the demonstration of integrity in daily interactions. Given that principal–teacher trust emerged as the strongest mediating mechanism, leadership development programs should extend beyond technical instructional competencies to emphasize the relational dimensions of instructional leadership. In addition, principals can strengthen teachers' self-efficacy by providing meaningful professional development opportunities, offering constructive feedback, recognizing teachers' achievements, and fostering collaborative professional learning communities. By integrating instructional leadership practices that simultaneously cultivate teacher self-efficacy and principal–teacher trust, schools can enhance teachers' affective commitment, thereby contributing to improved organizational effectiveness, instructional quality, and ultimately, better student learning outcomes. Future research should adopt longitudinal research designs to provide stronger evidence of causal relationships among instructional leadership, teacher self-efficacy, principal–teacher trust, and affective commitment. Further studies should also examine additional mediating and moderating variables that may influence these relationships across different institutional and cultural contexts. Given the strong emphasis on relational harmony and collectivist values within many Indonesian communities, both qualitative and quantitative investigations are needed to explore the culturally specific processes through which trust is developed and sustained in Islamic educational settings. As the present study was conducted in a single institution, future research should include comparative analyses across multiple schools, regions, and educational levels to enhance the generalizability and robustness of the findings.

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