

Self-Leadership and Teachers' Organizational Citizenship Behavior in Colleges: Psychological Empowerment as Mediator

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Abstract

Teachers' organizational citizenship behavior plays a crucial role in promoting school development and student growth. Based on cognitive evaluation theory, we hypothesize that psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between self-leadership and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. We collected data from 515 college teachers in Shandong Province, China, and conducted statistical analysis using the PROCESS Macro for SPSS. The results indicate that self-leadership has a significant and positive correlation with teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. Additionally, through the mediating effect of psychological empowerment, self-leadership has a significant indirect effect on teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. The results of this study are significant for understanding and promoting teachers' organizational citizenship behavior of college teachers.

Keywords: *College Teachers, Self-Leadership, Psychological Empowerment, Teachers' Organizational Citizenship Behavior.*

Introduction

Teachers practicing self-leadership play a crucial role in enhancing their self-cognition, self-motivation, and self-regulation (Marshall et al., 2012). Practicing self-leadership can enhance teachers' self-awareness, enabling them to contribute positively to school development (Ratnawati et al., 2022). Teachers' self-leadership is not only a process of individual self-regulation but also a continuous self-development process (Sary et al., 2023). When teachers acquire the necessary self-motivation and self-guidance skills, they are more likely to engage in extra-role behaviors to promote school development (Mansor et al., 2013). Teachers' self-leadership is defined as the process by which teachers enhance their teaching abilities, foster colleague cooperation, and achieve effective execution of educational tasks and professional growth through strategies such as self-cognition, self-management, and goal setting (Hastuti et al., 2023). Self-leadership has received widespread attention in the educational field and is regarded as a key factor in enhancing teachers' personal development and improving their job performance (Warren et al., 2021). Teachers who practice self-leadership are more likely to exhibit extra-role behavior, perceiving tasks beyond their formal job scope as positive and meaningful (Konuk, 2017). When teachers possess a high degree of self-cognition, they are more inclined to voluntarily engage in extra-role behavior beyond their formal job descriptions (Altinkurt et al., 2016). Specifically, self-leadership is positively correlated with teachers' altruistic behavior (Mansor et al., 2013), as well as teachers' loyalty (Kasapoglu, 2020). Previous research has demonstrated that self-leadership positively impacts teachers' organizational citizenship behavior (Munawaroh et al., 2022).

Past studies have investigated the potential mediating relationship between self-leadership and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior, finding that self-efficacy plays a mediating role between self-leadership and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior (Munawaroh et al., 2022). However, these studies have overlooked a critical factor, which is the state of empowerment that teachers feel in their professional roles. According to the perspective of cognitive evaluation theory (CET), individuals contribute to psychological empowerment by increasing autonomy and developing competence (Javed et al., 2017). This study aims to use the CET framework to explain the psychological mechanisms (e.g., psychological empowerment) between self-leadership and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. By exploring the relationship between self-leadership, psychological empowerment, and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior, this

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study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the intrinsic motivation underlying teacher behavior.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between self-leadership, psychological empowerment, and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. More specifically, it builds on a series of research findings that focus on tracing the pathways through which self-leadership influences teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. This study is guided by the following research questions:

Does self-leadership have a direct impact on teachers' organizational citizenship behavior?

Does psychological empowerment mediate the effect of self-leadership on teachers' organizational citizenship behavior?

Literature Review

Self-Leadership and Teachers' Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Self-leadership is defined as the process by which individuals in a work environment effectively guide and regulate their own thoughts, emotions, and behaviors through a series of self-influence mechanisms (Harari et al., 2021). Individuals who practice self-leadership can set goals through self-management and regulation, drive themselves forward without external rewards, and use self-assessment to evaluate behaviors and outcomes, thereby reducing dependence on external incentives and narrowing the gap between goals and current status (Stewart et al., 2019). In the context of education, teachers who practice self-leadership are committed to enhancing their teaching effectiveness, fostering collaboration among colleagues, and achieving educational goals and professional growth efficiently through strategies such as self-cognition, self-management, and goal setting (Hastuti et al., 2023). Research has shown that the structure of self-leadership differs from that of traditional leadership styles (such as transformational leadership and transactional leadership). Self-leadership emphasizes intrinsic self-regulation and autonomous behavior (Houghton & Neck, 2002), whereas traditional leadership focuses more on the leader's influence and motivation of subordinates (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Additionally, self-leadership can explain variance in teachers' organizational citizenship behavior (Munawara et al., 2022).

Teachers' organizational citizenship behavior refers to actions taken by teachers that go beyond their prescribed duties but are crucial to the survival of the school. These behaviors can be categorized into three levels: extra-role behavior towards students, extra-role behavior towards the team, and extra-role behavior towards the organization (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2000). Extra-role behavior towards students refers to actions directly and intentionally aimed at improving teaching quality and helping students achieve better academic performance, such as assisting students in acquiring expertise in new subjects or helping disadvantaged students. Extra-role behavior towards the team involves intentionally helping specific teachers, such as mentoring new teachers or assisting colleagues with heavy workloads. Extra-role behavior towards the organization focuses on actions aimed at the overall benefit of the team or school, such as offering innovative suggestions for school improvement or volunteering for non-obligatory tasks (Belogolovsky & Somech, 2010; Somech & Bogler, 2002). Zeinabadi (2010) emphasized that teachers' organizational citizenship behavior highlights the spontaneous actions of teachers in providing various forms of help and support to colleagues, principals, and students. Teachers' organizational citizenship behavior helps foster a positive school climate, which is essential for achieving the school's goals (Oplatka, 2009).

Previous research has found that when individuals' intrinsic motivation and sense of autonomy are enhanced, they are more likely to exhibit proactive and spontaneous behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Self-leadership is characterized by self-motivation, where individuals do not rely on external directives but effectively manage and regulate their goals, thereby proactively engaging in voluntary behavior beyond their formal duties (Afridi et al., 2022; Daud, 2020). Additionally, schools encourage teachers to demonstrate self-leadership behaviors to strengthen their self-regulation and motivation abilities (Konuk, 2017). Self-regulation and motivation abilities are key drivers of teachers' organizational citizenship behavior (Choong et al., 2020). Therefore, when teachers practice self-leadership, they can engage in autonomous decision-

making and self-motivation (Marshall et al., 2012), which enhances their motivation to engage in extra-role behavior, leading them to exhibit more teachers' organizational citizenship behavior (Munawaroh & Suriansyah, 2021). Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

Hypothesis 1: Self-leadership has a significant and positive correlation with teachers' organizational citizenship behavior.

Self-Leadership, Psychological Empowerment, and Teachers' Organizational Citizenship Behavior

While self-leadership may have a positive impact on teachers' organizational citizenship behavior, we posit that this effect is mediated by psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment is a state of intrinsic motivation that drives individuals to actively perform tasks and is composed of four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Spreitzer, 1995). The meaning dimension of psychological empowerment refers to an individual's perception of the significance and importance of their work tasks. Competence refers to an individual's confidence in their ability and skills to accomplish work tasks. Self-determination pertains to the autonomy and sense of control an individual has in their work. Impact reflects an individual's belief that they can have a significant influence on their work environment and outcomes.

In our study, we examined the mediating role of psychological empowerment in the relationship between self-leadership and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior within the framework of CET. According to the CET framework, when individuals experience a sense of autonomy, they are more likely to have higher intrinsic motivation and exhibit more positive behaviors (Deci et al., 1991). Spreitzer (1995) explored the four dimensions of psychological empowerment—meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact—as a means to enhance individuals' intrinsic motivation and positive behaviors. Within the CET framework, the meaning and impact of work are seen as the starting points for stimulating individuals' intrinsic task motivation, while competence and self-determination can enhance task-related motivation (Deci et al., 1989). Based on this argument and the concept of self-leadership, we propose that the self-leadership demonstrated by teachers can enhance task-related motivation, such as psychological empowerment. In other words, teachers practicing self-leadership may experience a higher degree of psychological empowerment. Empirical research by Mansor et al. (2013) indicates that teachers who practice self-leadership can autonomously set goals and develop strategies to achieve them, enhancing their sense of self-efficacy and accountability, which leads to increased psychological empowerment (Shqerat, 2022). Teachers who practice self-leadership engage in self-motivation and self-reflection, and this intrinsic drive and reflective ability further enhance their psychological empowerment (Aldighrir, 2019). Somech (2016) also found that when teachers have a high level of autonomy, they are more willing to take on responsibilities and exhibit more extra-role behavior. Furthermore, teachers who experience psychological empowerment demonstrate more teachers' organizational citizenship behavior (Richardson et al., 2021). Research supports the connection between psychological empowerment and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Tsemach, 2014). Therefore, we hypothesize the following relationships:

Hypothesis 2: Psychological empowerment plays a mediating role between self-leadership and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior.

Based on the review of previous research and the development of hypotheses regarding the correlations between self-leadership, psychological empowerment, and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior, this study proposes the conceptual research model shown in Figure 1.

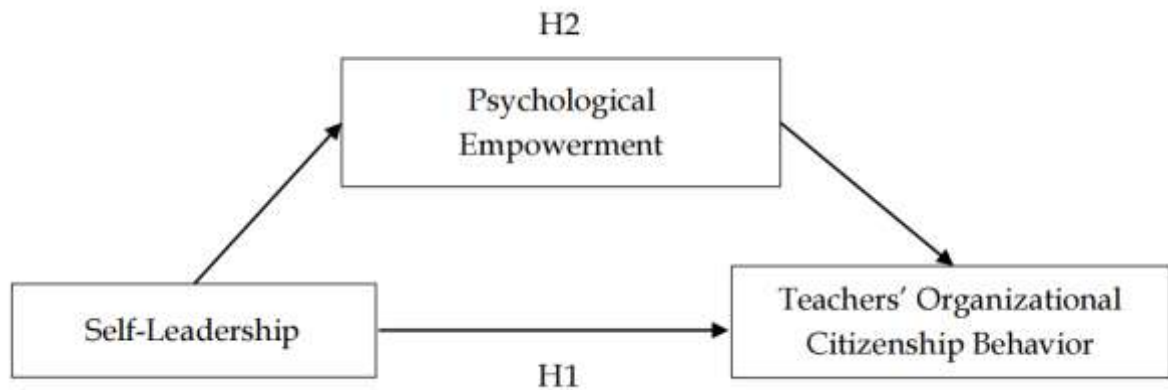


Figure 1. Research Framework

Method

Sample and Data Collection

This study used a convenience sampling method to collect data from teachers at three colleges in Shandong Province, China. Convenience sampling is a non-probability method used to select samples based on participants' willingness to participate and terrestrial convenience (Creswell, 2014). Subsequently, 200 teachers from each school were invited to participate. Participation in the study was voluntary and without compensation. With the consent of the principals and teachers, we distributed online questionnaires to 600 teachers. The final sample for this study consisted of 515 valid questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of 85.833%. We collected demographic information on gender, age, and teaching experience. Consistent with the demographic structure of the population in Shandong Province, most teachers were female, the majority were middle-aged (31 to 40 years old), and most had limited teaching experience (less than 6 years), as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Information (N=515)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	150	29.1
	Female	365	70.9
Age	30 years old and under	173	33.6
	31 to 40 years old	199	38.6
	41 to 50 years old	96	18.6
	Age 51 and older	47	9.1
Teaching Age	6 years and under	291	56.5
	7 to 15 years	111	21.6
	16 years and above	113	21.9

Measurement

The data for testing the mediation model in this study were collected through a quantitative survey method using structured questionnaires. The study employed Brislin's (1970) method to translate the questionnaire from English to Chinese, ensuring that the translation was accurate and comprehensible. During the "back translation" process, the English scales were first translated into Chinese and then retranslated back into English. After comparing the differences, we made adjustments to some items to preserve the focus and accuracy of the study. Ultimately, we utilized 45 items distributed across three primary scales.

Self-Leadership Scale: This study translated the instrument developed by Houghton et al. (2012), which consists of 9 items across three dimensions: behavior awareness & volition (e.g., I establish specific goals for my own performance), task motivation (e.g., I visualize myself successfully performing a task before I do it), and constructive cognition (e.g., I think about my own beliefs and assumptions whenever I encounter a difficult situation). Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating higher levels of self-leadership among teachers. In this study: RMSEA=.087, CFI=.963, TLI=.945, SRMR=.056, indicating good model fit indices (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The overall scale in this study had a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .825.

Psychological Empowerment Scale: This study employed the 12-item Psychological Empowerment Scale developed by Spreitzer (1995) to measure teachers' psychological empowerment. The scale consists of four dimensions: meaning (e.g., The work I do is very important to me), competence (e.g., I am confident about my ability to do my job), self-determination (e.g., I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job), and impact (e.g., My impact on what happens in my department is large). Each dimension includes four items. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating stronger psychological empowerment among teachers. This scale has been used in the Chinese education sector and has demonstrated good reliability and validity (Meng & Sun, 2019). In this study: RMSEA=.073, CFI=.962, TLI=.948, SRMR=.056, indicating good model fit indices (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The overall scale in this study had a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .847.

Teachers' Organizational Citizenship Behavior Scale: This study used the 24-item extra-role behavior scale developed by Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2000) to measure teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. The scale consists of three dimensions: extra-role behavior towards students (e.g., Stay after school hours to help students with class materials), extra-role behavior towards the team (e.g., Orient new teachers even though it is not required), and extra-role behavior towards the organization (e.g., Volunteer for roles and tasks that are not required). Each item was rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating more teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. Two items related to teachers' organizational citizenship behavior were removed due to factor loadings <0.4 in exploratory factor analysis, leaving a final set of 22 items. Previous empirical research has demonstrated that this scale has good reliability and validity, making it effective for assessing and predicting teachers' organizational citizenship behavior (Bogler & Somech, 2004; Shapira-Lishchinsky & Tsemach, 2014). Donglong et al. (2020) applied this scale in China and found that its Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranged from .704 to .902. In this study: RMSEA=.079, CFI=.998, TLI=.998, SRMR=.030, indicating good model fit indices (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The overall scale had a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .826.

Data Analysis

After data collection, we used SPSS program to examine reliability, validity, descriptive statistics and correlation. The research model was tested using Hayes PROCESS Macro for SPSS Model 4.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analyses

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for all study variables, including means, standard deviations, and correlations. The correlation coefficients align with the expected directions and provide preliminary support for our research hypotheses. Correlation analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between self-leadership and psychological empowerment ($r=.590, p<.001$), as well as between self-leadership and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior ($r=.562, p<.001$). Additionally, psychological empowerment was significantly correlated with teachers' organizational citizenship behavior ($r=.549, p<.001$).

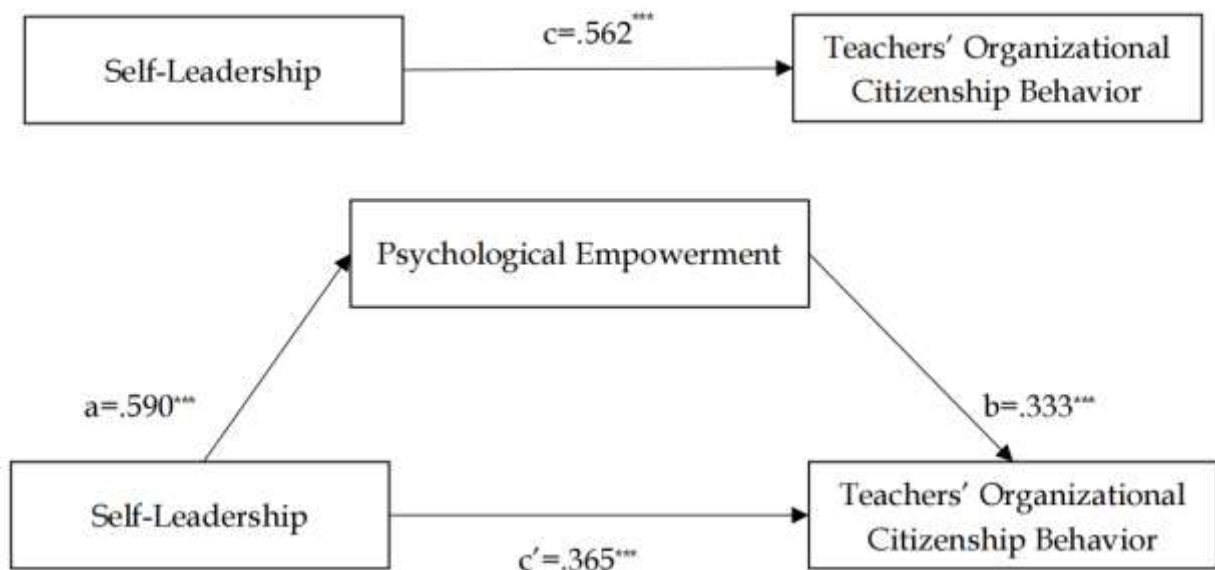
Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviations and Correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	SL	PE	TOCB
SL	3.043	.805			
PE	3.023	.751	.590***		
TOCB	3.527	.644	.562***	.549***	

Note: N=515; *** $p < .001$; SL=Self-leadership; PE=Psychological empowerment; TOCB=Teachers' organizational citizenship behavior.

Hypothesis Testing

This study used Hayes (2013) PROCESS Macro for SPSS Model 4 to examine the mediating role of psychological empowerment in the relationship between self-leadership and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. The results indicated that the total effect of self-leadership on teachers' organizational citizenship behavior (path c, Fig.2) was significant ($\beta = .562$, $t = 15.390$, $p < .001$), as shown in Table 3. The relationship between self-leadership and psychological empowerment (path a, Fig.2) showed a significant positive effect ($\beta = .590$, $t = 16.557$, $p < .001$). Additionally, the results indicated that the relationship between psychological empowerment and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior (path b, Fig.2) was also significantly positive ($\beta = .333$, $t = 7.782$, $p < .001$). Overall, our study findings suggest that self-leadership has a positive and significant effect on teachers' organizational citizenship behavior through the mediating role of psychological empowerment (path c', Fig.2) ($\beta = .365$, $t = 8.533$, $p < .001$), supporting Hypothesis 2.

**Fig.2 Mediation Model****Table 3. Results of Simple Mediation Model for TOCB**

Direct effect model			
Predictor		Outcome=PE	
		β	t
SL	path a	.590	16.557***
Direct effect model			
Predictor		Outcome=TOCB	
		β	t
SL	path c'	.365	8.533***

PE	path b	.333	7.782***
Total effect model			
Predictor		Outcome=TOCB	
		β	t
SL	path c	.562	15.390***

Note: N=515; SL=Self-leadership, PE=Psychological empowerment, TOCB=Teachers' organizational citizenship behavior.

To further test H2, a Sobel test was conducted, which directly examines the indirect effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable through the mediator (Sobel, 1982). The results, as shown in Table 4 ($p < .000$), indicate that the positive effect of self-leadership on teachers' organizational citizenship behavior is mediated by psychological empowerment. These findings support H2.

Table 4. Sobel Test of Mediating Effects

Path	SL→PE (a)	PE→TOCB (b)	SE (a)	SE (b)	Z
SL→PE→TOCB	.551	.286	.033	.037	7.015***

Note: SL=Self-Leadership, PE=Psychological empowerment, TOCB=Teachers' organizational citizenship behavior; SE=Standard error.

Discussion

Self-leadership is believed to influence teachers' behaviors and organizational outcomes (Sesen et al., 2017), however, research specifically focusing on the impact of self-leadership on teachers' organizational citizenship behavior is limited. This study tested the hypothesis that when teachers practice self-leadership, they are more likely to voluntarily exhibit teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. Additionally, this study examined the mediating role of psychological empowerment in the relationship between self-leadership and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. The results showed that self-leadership has a significant positive impact on teachers' organizational citizenship behavior, and psychological empowerment serves as a mediating variable in this relationship. The findings offer several theoretical and practical implications, which will be discussed further below.

The results of this study confirmed H1, which posited a significant and positive correlation between self-leadership and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior, consistent with previous research (Mansor et al., 2013). This study validated the relationship between self-leadership and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior, indicating that self-leadership can encourage teachers to increase their organizational citizenship behavior. Additionally, this study extends the findings of Quraishi and Aziz (2018) on enhancing teachers' organizational citizenship behavior, which found that cultivating teachers' self-awareness and self-regulation can effectively enhance their organizational citizenship behavior. Consistent with past research, teachers practicing self-leadership demonstrate the ability to act in response to environmental changes, positively influencing extra-role behaviors (Konuk, 2017). This study suggests that a possible reason for this is that teachers practicing self-leadership can enhance their self-motivation, leading to more teachers' organizational citizenship behavior (Munawaroh et al., 2022).

The results of this study support H2, revealing that psychological empowerment plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between self-leadership and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. This suggests that when teachers practice self-leadership, they perceive greater psychological empowerment, which in turn leads to more teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. The findings align with the empirical research by Amundsen and Martinsen (2015), which confirmed the positive impact of self-leadership on psychological empowerment. Previous research exploring the impact of self-leadership on teachers' organizational citizenship behavior may have overlooked the examination of psychological empowerment as a mediating variable. Therefore, this study extends prior research by further establishing the partial mediating effect of psychological empowerment in the relationship between self-leadership and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. This indicates that psychological empowerment is a key

facilitating factor for teachers' organizational citizenship behavior (Saleem et al., 2017). Teachers' perceptions of psychological empowerment can enhance their proactivity and sense of belonging to the school, leading them to voluntarily go beyond their basic duties and exhibit more teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. The findings also support the perspective of CET, which posits that intrinsic task motivation primarily stems from the perception of the value and impact of work, and that enhancing competence and autonomy can further strengthen this motivation, resulting in more positive behaviors (Deci et al., 1989). Specifically, by practicing self-leadership, teachers can gain autonomy support, which enhances their sense of autonomy and competence, leading them to exhibit more teachers' organizational citizenship behavior through the influence of psychological empowerment. Therefore, the findings further deepen our understanding of the underlying mechanisms through which self-leadership impacts teachers' organizational citizenship behavior.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for educational practice. First, the results indicate that practicing self-leadership among teachers contributes to enhancing teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. Therefore, college leaders can create supportive environments to help teachers better practice self-leadership, and they can also organize specialized self-leadership training to help teachers master core skills such as goal setting and self-motivation. Second, the results also suggest that psychological empowerment partially mediates the relationship between self-leadership and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. Therefore, college leaders can give teachers more decision-making power and autonomy in curriculum design, teaching methods and research directions, which can increase their autonomy and responsibility for their work.

Limitations

First, this study employed a cross-sectional study, which makes it challenging to infer causal relationships to some extent. To explore causality more deeply, we recommend that future research adopt a longitudinal study design. Second, this study only examined the mediating role of psychological empowerment, without addressing other potential psychological mechanisms such as affective commitment and psychological capital. Future research could explore a wider range of psychological mechanisms and their impacts. Third, the sample for this study consisted of college teachers from Shandong Province, China, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research could gather data from other samples, such as teachers from other provinces. Finally, we tested this theoretical model in the context of Chinese education, but it is uncertain whether these results are applicable to different cultural contexts. We do not know if the empirically tested relationships in this study exist in other cultures. Therefore, future research could conduct comparative analyses.

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