

The boundary role of motivation in the relationship between competence, leadership, work environment, and teachers' continuance commitment

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ABSTRACT

Background: Keeping highly qualified teaching staff demands comprehensive insight into the mental and structural drivers shaping an educator's choice to stay at their current school. While professional capability, administrative guidance, and workplace conditions are established predictors of institutional loyalty, it is still unclear how professional drive acts as a moderator within these dynamics.

Purpose: The current inquiry explores the capacity of occupational motivation to serve as an interacting variable, specifically examining its influence on the pathways linking competence, leadership styles, and school climate with continuous institutional loyalty amid escalating job demands.

Method: This research employed a cross-sectional explanatory design involving 250 state junior high educators in Salatiga City, Indonesia. Participants were chosen via a proportional randomized sampling approach. To gather information, we distributed standardized, independently completed surveys based on validated metrics. Responses were measured on a 5-level rating format to capture participant viewpoints. Finally, the empirical data underwent evaluation via Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

Findings: The structural model explained 76.6% of the variance in teachers' continuance commitment. Competence, leadership, work environment, and work motivation each had positive effects on continuance commitment. However, work motivation demonstrated differential moderating effects: it weakened the relationship between leadership and continuance commitment, strengthened the relationship between work environment and continuance commitment, and did not significantly moderate the relationship between competence and continuance commitment. These findings suggest that work motivation operates as a context-dependent mechanism rather than uniformly strengthening organizational influences, highlighting its importance in developing effective teacher retention strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

Accelerated digital shifts, recent pedagogical adaptations following the pandemic, and the continuous embedding of digital devices into classroom instruction are currently triggering massive structural overhauls across the modern academic sphere (Imran et al., 2025; Kolleck, 2025; Sinche-Guzmán et al., 2026). As a result, teachers are increasingly required to extend their roles beyond traditional instruction by continuously adapting their pedagogical practices and upgrading their professional competencies (Afriani et al., 2025; Thủy, 2025). Although these changes are essential for improving educational quality, they have simultaneously intensified occupational demands that threaten teachers' psychological well-being (Creagh et al., 2023; Wahab et al., 2024). Recent evidence indicates that 73% of teachers experience work-related stress (Steiner et al., 2022), 72% report digital fatigue (Santamaría et al., 2021), and a substantial proportion experience emotional exhaustion and anxiety associated with technological adaptation (Ela, 2025; Rajendran et al., 2020). Collectively, these findings suggest that contemporary educational reforms not only require greater professional competence but also expose teachers to increasing psychological pressures that may undermine organizational stability.

These conditions present significant challenges for educational institutions seeking to retain experienced teachers. Typically, escalating psychological strain and burnout erode teachers' emotional attachment and identification with their schools, which are the core components of affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Rajendran et al., 2020). When emotional loyalty is compromised by intense occupational demands, organizational sustainability increasingly depends on teachers' pragmatic willingness to remain in their institutions despite these challenges (Neziri, 2021; San-Martín et al., 2020). Such investment-based retention decisions are more accurately reflected by continuance commitment, which captures employees' evaluation of the accumulated professional investments, organizational support, and perceived costs associated with leaving the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Opolot et al., 2026). Unlike affective commitment (which is driven by emotional desire) or normative commitment (which is driven by moral obligation), continuance commitment functions as a critical stabilizing anchor during turbulent periods of educational change (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Thakur et al., 2026). It specifically explains why experienced teachers choose to stay: not necessarily because they are free from psychological pressure, but because the loss of organization-specific human capital, institutional familiarity, and accumulated relational resources outweighs the benefits of leaving (Lazear, 2009; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Strengthening continuance commitment therefore enables schools to preserve experienced human capital, reduce turnover risks, maintain instructional continuity, and sustain long-term organizational performance amid continuing educational transformation (Aldridge & McLure, 2024; Opolot et al., 2026).

Despite its strategic importance, the organizational mechanisms underlying teachers' continuance commitment remain insufficiently understood. While competence, leadership, work environment, and motivation have consistently been associated with organizational commitment (Abdi et al., 2024; Amoah et al., 2021; Xu & Pang, 2024; Zamroni & Erwansyah, 2026), existing studies have predominantly treated these variables as independent and additive predictors. This perspective implicitly assumes that organizational and individual resources exert uniform effects across teachers. However, empirical evidence indicates that teachers with comparable competencies and similar organizational support often exhibit different levels of continuance commitment (Ibrahim & Aljneibi, 2022; Öz et al., 2026), suggesting that the effectiveness of these resources may depend on teachers' motivational conditions. Moreover, prior studies have primarily examined organizational commitment as a multidimensional construct or emphasized affective commitment, leaving the specific mechanisms underlying continuance commitment comparatively underexplored (Rai et al., 2025). Consequently, the processes through which organizational resources and individual capabilities jointly shape teachers' continuance commitment remain insufficiently explained.

Although continuance commitment was originally conceptualized through Becker's Side-Bet Theory (1960) and subsequently operationalized by Meyer & Allen (1991) as employees' perceived costs of leaving an organization, the present study adopts Social Exchange Theory (SET) to explain the organizational processes through which these perceptions are formed. SET posits that employee–organization relationships evolve through reciprocal exchanges of valued resources, whereby organizational support generates an obligation to reciprocate through positive attitudes and sustained organizational attachment (Ahmad et al., 2023). Within educational institutions, supportive leadership and a conducive work environment represent organizational investments that enhance teachers' perceived value of remaining with the organization, while teacher competence represents accumulated professional capital that increases the value of organizational investments and the perceived costs of leaving the institution (Blau, 1964; Lazear, 2009; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Rai et al., 2025). Furthermore, work motivation functions as a cognitive boundary condition that influences how teachers interpret and utilize organizational resources, thereby determining the extent to which reciprocal exchanges translate into stronger continuance commitment (Ahmad et al., 2023; Ateş & Türk, 2022; Collie, 2023). By shifting the conceptualization of motivation from a conventional direct predictor to a moderating boundary condition, this study introduces a novel theoretical perspective. This repositioning represents the study's primary theoretical contribution, as it explicitly addresses the existing research gap by explaining why uniform organizational support and comparable personal competencies do not always result in equal levels of continuance commitment among teachers. Consequently, this moderated framework

advances existing literature on Social Exchange Theory in educational management by providing a more nuanced understanding of how teachers' internal motivational states dictate the effectiveness of organizational retention strategies. note

Building upon this perspective, the present study extends the application of Social Exchange Theory by proposing that reciprocal organizational exchanges do not uniformly strengthen continuance commitment but are contingent upon teachers' motivational states (Ahmad et al., 2023; Blau, 1964). While many previous studies have examined work motivation primarily as a direct antecedent of organizational commitment, relatively limited attention has been given to its role as a boundary condition influencing the extent to which competence, leadership, and work environment contribute to teachers' continuance commitment (Abdi et al., 2024; Ateş & Türk, 2022; Owan et al., 2022). By integrating the investment perspective of organizational commitment with Social Exchange Theory into a moderated framework, this study provides a more comprehensive explanation of teachers' investment-based decisions to remain within educational institutions.

While prior research frequently examines teacher retention variables in isolation, this study addresses a critical gap by synthesizing how internal capabilities and external organizational factors interact to drive continuance commitment, defined as an employee's loyalty and perceived need to remain with an organization (He & Sutunyarak, 2024), going beyond mere economic constraints (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Externally, principal instructional leadership, which encompasses curricular development, instructional leadership, professional development, and teachers' participation (Mora-Ruano et al., 2021), along with a comprehensively supportive work environment (Latuharhary et al., 2025), facilitate critical social exchange (Blau, 1964) that binds teachers through shared pedagogical routines and deeply embedded relational networks (İnce & Tikkanen, 2025; Xu & Pang, 2024). Internally, the retention value of these external resources depends on teacher competence, comprising the internalized knowledge and skills required for professional duties (Rafsanjani, 2022). Although general competencies are transferable (Ansori et al., 2021), transitioning to a new school demands reconstructing specific pedagogical knowledge tailored to the new context (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Zamroni & Erwansyah, 2026), meaning competent teachers perceive greater value in staying rather than abandoning their organizationally embedded human capital (Day & Gu, 2007; Siri et al., 2020). Finally, work motivation acts as the psychological catalyst bridging these elements; conceptualized as the tendency to direct and sustain effort through persistence and achievement orientation (Landy & Guion, 1970), motivation transforms external support and internal competence into a rational decision to stay. Highly motivated teachers invest sustained effort and recognize the lasting professional benefits of their current membership (Ateş & Türk, 2022), ultimately solidifying their continuance commitment to the institution.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the multidimensional determinants of continuance commitment among public junior high school (SMP Negeri) teachers in Salatiga City. Specifically, it investigates the direct effects of teacher competence, leadership, work environment, and motivation on continuance commitment, as well as the moderating role of motivation in the relationships between competence, leadership, work environment, and continuance commitment. To systematically address these objectives, the following hypotheses are proposed: (H1): Teacher competence has a positive direct effect on continuance commitment. (H2): Principal leadership has a positive direct effect on continuance commitment. (H3): Work environment has a positive direct effect on continuance commitment. (H4): Work motivation has a positive direct effect on continuance commitment. (H5): Work motivation positively moderates (strengthens) the relationship between teacher competence and continuance commitment. (H6): Work motivation positively moderates (strengthens) the relationship between leadership and continuance commitment. (H7): Work motivation positively moderates (strengthens) the relationship between work environment and continuance commitment.

METHODS

Relying on a cross-sectional observational strategy, the current investigation adopted an explanatory quantitative format geared toward evaluating specific structural hypotheses. Guided by the newly proposed conceptual framework, we assessed the interconnectedness of five core elements: individual proficiency, leadership dynamics, working conditions, motivation, and institutional allegiance. Acquiring metrics simultaneously provided the necessary snapshot to clarify the complex pathways connecting these targeted elements.

Ten government-funded middle schools (SMP Negeri) based in Salatiga City, comprising 494 educators, formed the initial demographic for this research. A cohort of 250 teachers was drawn utilizing a randomized, proportional allocation strategy to maintain balanced institutional quotas. Prior computation via G*Power determined a minimum boundary of 153 subjects to reach an actual power of 0.95. Thus, securing 250 participants firmly exceeds the statistical prerequisites, delivering strong validation capabilities to assess all direct and interactive pathways constructed for the variance-based structural evaluation (Faul et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2019).

A standardized survey instrument was deployed to gather empirical evidence across five latent constructs: teacher competence, leadership, work environment, work motivation, and continuance commitment. Because the cited literature primarily provided theoretical dimensions rather than exact item wordings, the measurement items were independently constructed originally in Indonesian by the researchers to capture the specific operational context of public junior high schools. Consequently, standard forward and backward

translation procedures were not applicable, as no foreign-language scales were directly adapted. The English item wordings provided in this manuscript are translations of the original Indonesian instrument, presented solely for reporting purposes. To accommodate manuscript length limits, the full 50-question instrument is omitted. Instead, Table 1 details the conceptual boundaries, theoretical parameters, and illustrative question examples for each factor. Furthermore, every variable was measured using ten original statements, with participants responding along a five-tier continuum bounded by 1 (total disagreement) and 5 (total agreement).

To address the multidimensional nature of these constructs, theoretical mapping was carefully structured prior to empirical testing. Particular theoretical attention was directed toward the continuance commitment scale. While the operational foundation of continuance commitment was adapted from [He and Sutunyarak \(2024\)](#)—focusing on employees' calculated need to stay with the organization—the specific items were explicitly mapped to [Meyer and Allen's \(1991\)](#) dimensions to avoid conceptual conflation. This mapping distinguishes the "perceived sacrifice" dimension (e.g., socio-economic costs) from the "lack of alternatives" dimension (viable employment options) to ensure the scale captures cost-based retention mechanisms rather than affective loyalty. Similarly, work motivation was comprehensively mapped into four theoretical dimensions derived from [Landy & Guion \(1970\)](#): effort, persistence, task orientation, and achievement orientation.

Because the instrument was newly constructed, a rigorous content validity procedure was conducted. The initial pool of 50 items was intensively consulted and evaluated by a panel of academic supervisors acting as Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). The panel assessed face validity, clarity, and theoretical alignment. Using the Content Validity Index (CVI), all items received relevance ratings of 3 (quite relevant) or 4 (highly relevant), yielding a perfect Item-Level CVI (I-CVI) of 1.00. Qualitative wording refinements were implemented based on the supervisors' feedback; for instance, abstract concepts like "socio-economic costs" in the continuance commitment scale were rephrased into more concrete terms suitable for civil servant teachers.

Following this expert review, a pilot test was administered to 30 public junior high school teachers who were excluded from the main sample to empirically verify item validity and internal consistency. Item validity was confirmed using the Corrected Item-Total Correlation, with all 50 items yielding coefficient values above the acceptable threshold (ranging from 0.438 to 0.763). Furthermore, preliminary Cronbach's Alpha coefficients demonstrated excellent internal consistency for all constructs: Continuance Commitment (0.896), Teacher Competence (0.864), Leadership (0.903), Work Environment (0.904), and Work Motivation (0.867). Because all indicators strictly met the required validity and reliability thresholds during this pilot phase, no items were deleted from the initial pool.

Table 1.*Summary of Measurement Constructs, Dimensions, and Sample Items*

Construct	Theoretical Source	Dimensions Indicators	/ No. of Items	Sample Item (Translated to English)
Continuance Commitment	He & Sutunyarak (2024); Meyer & Allen (1991)	Perceived sacrifices, lack of alternatives	10	"Leaving this school right now would require considerable personal sacrifice." (CC1)
Teacher Competence	Rafsanjani (2022)	Cognitive, psychomotor, affective behaviors	10	"I possess the necessary subject-matter knowledge to teach my classes effectively." (COM1)
Leadership	Mora-Ruano et al. (2021)	Curricular development, instructional leadership, professional development, participation	10	"My principal actively involves teachers in making school-level decisions." (LED7)
Work Environment	Latuharhary et al. (2025)	Physical, social, organizational environment, flexibility, well-being	10	"I maintain supportive and friendly relationships with my colleagues." (WE3)
Work Motivation	Landy & Guion (1970)	Effort, persistence, task orientation, achievement orientation	10	"I remain persistent in teaching difficult concepts until students understand them." (MOT3)

The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM was specifically chosen over covariance-based SEM because the research objective leans toward prediction and explaining the variance of the target construct, and it effectively handles complex structural models involving multiple moderating variables without requiring strict assumptions of data normality (Hair et al., 2022).

The analysis adhered to a two-step procedural framework (Henseler et al., 2015). Initially, we evaluated the outer model's metrics to verify structural integrity and internal consistency, ensuring both the composite reliability index and Cronbach's alpha exceeded the 0.70 baseline. We confirmed convergent traits via the Average Variance Extracted (demanding values above 0.50). For rigorous divergent validation, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) proportion was applied, restricted below a 0.85 ceiling. Following this, the inner path model underwent examination to verify the proposed direct linkages and interactive dynamics. To capture how occupational drive functions as an interacting variable, we formulated interaction terms by applying a product-indicator technique connecting the independent elements to the moderator. To produce stable p-values and t-values, a distribution-free resampling method utilizing 5,000 bootstrap iterations was implemented. Decisions on confirming hypotheses relied on a $p < 0.05$ threshold, alongside evaluations of Q^2 and R^2 values to measure the framework's predictive capability and variance explanation (Hair et al., 2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Table 2.

Summary of Data Characteristics and Bivariate Associations Among Constructs

	Variables	Mean ± SD	Min– Max	1	2	3	4	5
1	Teacher Competence	3.29 ± 1.01	1.01–4.70	—				
2	Leadership	3.27 ± 1.02	1.02–4.70	.453**	—			
3	Work Environment	3.35 ± 1.15	1.15–5.00	.580**	.521**	—		
4	Work Motivation	3.36 ± 1.03	1.03–5.00	.709**	.537**	.670**	—	
5	Continuance Commitment	3.47 ± 1.04	1.04–5.00	.713**	.618**	.747**	.746**	—

Note: Data figures denote the average ± standard deviation (SD), alongside recorded minimum-maximum spectrums. Bivariate association metrics are provided. ** denotes statistical significance below the .01 threshold (2-tailed).

An examination of the central tendencies, data spread, and bivariate relationships linking the examined factors is outlined in Table 2. Peaking at an average of 3.47 (SD = 1.04), continuance commitment emerged as the most dominant factor. This outcome indicates

educators sense substantial penalties for quitting their current roles, underscoring a strong desire to stay fueled by accrued benefits and perceived limited options. On the other end, the leadership dimension yielded the minimum average result ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.02$), yet maintained a position above the scale's midpoint. Furthermore, the variance in participant responses is deemed sufficient, as evidenced by the dispersion values spanning 1.01 to 1.15.

A bivariate correlation procedure was then executed to explore initial relationships connecting the latent variables and to screen for multicollinearity concerns before testing the structural framework. The resulting inter-variable metrics stayed beneath the accepted 0.80 limit, indicating an absence of critical collinearity problems. Additionally, every independent factor displayed a meaningful positive link to the continuance commitment dimension ($p < .01$). The work environment construct displayed the most robust correlation value with the dependent variable ($r = .747$). This was closely trailed by the motivation factor ($r = .746$) and competence ($r = .713$), while leadership yielded a weaker, yet statistically relevant, connection ($r = .618$). Ultimately, this initial evidence justifies the subsequent testing of the proposed pathways and interactive dynamics through the SEM-PLS approach.

Measurement Model Assessment

Table 3.

Measurement Model Assessment: Reliability and Convergent Validity

	Construct	Items	Loading Range	AVE	C.R	C.A
1	Competence	10	0.719–0.800	0.581	0.933	0.920
2	Leadership	10	0.730–0.816	0.603	0.938	0.927
3	Work Environment	10	0.806–0.833	0.542	0.922	0.906
4	Motivation	10	0.702–0.779	0.676	0.954	0.947
5	Continuance Commitment	10	0.701–0.798	0.552	0.925	0.910

Note: Loading = item loading score; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; C.R = Composite Reliability; C.A = Cronbach's Alpha. Construct validity is confirmed when variables meet standard minimums (loadings > 0.70 , AVE > 0.50 , C.R/C. A > 0.70).

The analytical results verifying item dependability, scale reliability, and convergent characteristics for the examined factors are summarized within Table 3. A review of the data reveals that all item weights fall between 0.701 and 0.833, thus meeting the >0.70 condition for individual indicator robustness. To evaluate internal cohesion, we examined both the Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha (CA) parameters; these coefficients spanned 0.906 to 0.954, easily clearing the required 0.70 standard. In terms of convergent validity, the analysis generated Average Variance Extracted (AVE) proportions ranging from

0.542 up to 0.676, securely surpassing the 0.50 minimum. Consequently, the data structures proved highly reliable and valid, paving the way for the core structural estimations.

Table 4.

Discriminant Validity Assessment Using the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Constructs	COM	LED	WE	MOT	CC
1	Competence (COM)	—				
2	Leadership (LED)	0.492	—			
3	Work Environment (WE)	0.622	0.557	—		
4	Motivation (MOT)	0.777	0.588	0.723	—	
5	Continuance Commitment (CC)	0.780	0.673	0.804	0.822	—

The establishment of divergent boundaries between the examined variables was executed via the HTMT criteria, as summarized in Table 4. All generated scores fell between 0.492 and 0.822, securely bypassing the rigid 0.85 limit. Ultimately, these results guarantee sufficient construct separation, substantiating that every individual factor measures an entirely separate empirical entity.

Structural Model Assessment and Hypothesis Testing

Table 5 outlines the results of the theoretical testing and inner framework analysis generated by the non-distributional bootstrapping run. Data reveals meaningful and positive primary linkages across all direct hypotheses (H1 to H4, p-value < 0.001). The strongest impacts on continuance commitment originated from competence and work environment, which both recorded identical path weights of 0.305 (accompanied by t-statistics of 5.301 and 5.750, respectively), thus substantiating H1 and H3. Furthermore, H2 and H4 gained empirical backing as leadership (β : 0.213, t: 4.770) along with motivation (β : 0.215, t: 3.745) registered notable positive correlations. Ultimately, the evidence verifies that working conditions, principal guidance, personal capability, and professional motivation are vital predictors of a teacher's ongoing dedication.

Concerning the interactive pathways, the data rejected H5. This implies that professional drive failed to serve as a meaningful moderator within the link connecting individual capability to institutional loyalty (path coefficient = -0.058; t-value = 1.217; p-value = 0.224). On the other hand, the interplay involving principal guidance and inner drive yielded empirical relevance (t-score: 2.472, p-metric: 0.014). However, the resulting coefficient trended negatively (beta = -0.093). Since our original proposition anticipated a

reinforcing dynamic, H6 must be classified as unsupported. This inverse interaction points to a compensatory dynamic linking outer administrative support and inner professional drive. To elaborate, educators equipped with elevated internal drive sustain their organizational dedication intrinsically, which diminishes their need for strong leadership backing. In contrast, active instructional leadership from the principal becomes essential to secure the ongoing commitment of staff members lacking such inner drive. Finally, the evidence validated H7, confirming that a teacher's motivation acts as a powerful amplifier for the favorable linkage connecting workplace climate to retention intent (beta weight: 0.155; t-statistic: 3.584; $p < 0.001$).

Table 5.

Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

	Structural Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	Competence → Continuance Commitment	0.305	5.301	<0.001	Supported
H2	Leadership → Continuance Commitment	0.213	4.77	<0.001	Supported
H3	Work Environment → Continuance Commitment	0.305	5.75	<0.001	Supported
H4	Motivation → Continuance Commitment	0.215	3.745	<0.001	Supported
H5	Competence × Motivation → Continuance Commitment	-0.058	1.217	0.224	Not Supported
H6	Leadership × Motivation → Continuance Commitment	-0.093	2.472	0.014	Not Supported
H7	Work Environment × Motivation → Continuance Commitment	0.155	3.584	<0.001	Supported

Note: β = path coefficient; t-values were obtained through bootstrapping procedure. Hypotheses were supported when p-values were below 0.05. The symbol $\times$ represents the interaction effect between the predictor construct and motivation.

A comprehensive review of the framework's predictive capacity and variance explanation is outlined in Table 6. For the dependent construct of continuance commitment, the R-squared metric was recorded at 0.766. Consequently, the modeled factors—namely, teacher capability, administrative guidance, occupational climate, inner drive, and their corresponding interactions—are responsible for 76.6% of the variance in retention tendencies. Guided by standard PLS-SEM thresholds (Hair, Ringle, et al., 2019), this specific outcome denotes substantial interpretive strength. Additionally, the adjusted R^2 stood at 0.759, which proves the structural design upholds its robust predictive quality independent of the complexity or count of the independent variables.

In addition, we evaluated forecasting accuracy via the blindfolding technique to calculate the Stone–Geisser Q^2 metric. For continuance commitment, the resulting Q^2 statistic stood at 0.413. Because this figure surpasses the baseline requirement of zero, it confirms the inner framework holds sufficient forecasting capability. Taken together, these empirical results verify that our structural design delivers robust variance explanation alongside a strong capacity for predicting educator retention.

Table 6.

Structural Model Evaluation: Coefficient of Determination (R^2) and Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Endogenous Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Q^2	Evaluation
Continuance Commitment	0.766	0.759	0.413	Substantial explanatory power and high predictive relevance

Discussion

The current research explored the pathways driving teachers' continuance commitment by combining internal attributes and structural elements—specifically individual capability, principal direction, and school atmosphere—alongside the conditional functions of job drive. The evaluation yielded high interpretive strength, accounting for 76.6% of the dispersion observed in the retention metric. Broadly speaking, the results offer empirical validation that an educator's choice to stay is dictated by both internalized psychological assets and workplace environments that alter the subjective worth and functional necessity of keeping their current job. Furthermore, by evaluating work drive as an interactive variable, this research highlights that motivational elements fail to equally magnify every driver of continuous loyalty; instead, their impact relies heavily on the distinct origin point of the commitment process.

The Influence of Teacher Competence on Continuance Commitment among Public Junior High School Teachers in Salatiga City

The findings support H1, indicating that teacher competence significantly predicts continuance commitment. Rather than merely reflecting individual capability, teacher competence may also function as an accumulated professional investment that strengthens teachers' incentives to remain within their current institutions. From a human capital perspective, competence represents professional resources developed through continuous learning, teaching experience, and adaptation to institutional practices, which generate professional value over time (Caena & Redecker, 2019; Munezero et al., 2026). Over time, teachers acquire not only general pedagogical capabilities but also organization-specific knowledge regarding curriculum implementation, organizational routines, collegial relationships, and institutional practices within their schools (Pinalas-Abaton & Osias, 2025;

Vindigni, 2023). As these professional investments accumulate, they may increase teachers' perceived costs of organizational departure, which constitute the core mechanism underlying continuance commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

These accumulated resources may influence teachers' perceptions regarding the consequences of leaving their current institutions because a substantial proportion of their practical value is embedded within the school's organizational context (Opolot et al., 2026). Although teachers' general professional competencies remain transferable across educational institutions (Ansori et al., 2021), transitioning to a new school often requires substantial adaptation and the reconstruction of context-specific pedagogical knowledge, organizational routines, relational networks, and tacit understandings developed through prolonged organizational experience (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Xu & Pang, 2024; Zamroni & Erwansyah, 2026). Consequently, competent teachers may perceive greater value in maintaining their existing employment relationship because a considerable portion of their accumulated human capital is organizationally embedded and cannot be fully utilized immediately within a new institutional environment (Day & Gu, 2007; Siri et al., 2020).

This finding is consistent with previous studies demonstrating that teacher competence strengthens organizational commitment (Abdi et al., 2024; Siri et al., 2020; Zamroni & Erwansyah, 2026), while further suggesting that this relationship operates through teachers' evaluations of the organizational value attached to their accumulated professional investments. Extending Meyer & Allen's (1991) investment-based perspective, the present findings indicate that retention decisions are not solely driven by external constraints or limited employment alternatives but may also arise from the perceived value of organization-specific human capital accumulated within the current school. In this regard, continuance commitment reflects not only economic considerations but also teachers' rational assessments of the professional investments that have become deeply embedded in their organizational context.

The Influence of Principal Leadership on Continuance Commitment among Public Junior High School Teachers in Salatiga City

The confirmation of H2 highlights the beneficial role leadership plays in fostering continuous organizational dedication among educators. Specifically, capable administrative direction drives staff retention by building collaborative institutional connections and helping educators gather essential professional assets. Rather than acting strictly as task coordinators, principals serve as organizational delegates who shape teacher evaluations regarding fairness, appreciation, institutional backing, and avenues for skill enhancement (Amoah et al., 2021; Xu & Pang, 2024). Ultimately, these supervisory actions amplify the

appeal of the employment contract by establishing an ecosystem that supports high performance and lifelong professional development (Supendi et al., 2025).

From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), supportive leadership reflects organizational investment in employees through the provision of guidance, recognition, and developmental support (Xiu et al., 2026). As teachers experience consistent leadership support, they gradually establish trust, collaborative relationships, and institutional familiarity that become embedded within their organizational experience (Sariakin et al., 2025; Supendi et al., 2025). These relational resources represent valuable organizational assets that are accumulated over time and may not be easily transferred to a different institutional context (Amoah et al., 2021; Mutmainnah et al., 2022). Consequently, leaving the current organization may require teachers to rebuild similar professional relationships and support systems, thereby increasing the perceived costs associated with organizational departure, which constitute the core mechanism underlying continuance commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

This outcome aligns with prior research demonstrating that accommodating leadership strengthens teachers' organizational commitment by enhancing organizational support, professional relationships, and workplace trust (Amoah et al., 2021; Mutmainnah et al., 2022; Supendi et al., 2025; Xu & Pang, 2024). Nevertheless, the current investigation extends earlier scholarship by proposing that leadership contributes to continuance commitment not only by fostering positive organizational relationships but also by generating relational organizational resources that increase teachers' perceived value of remaining and the perceived costs associated with leaving the institution. These findings indicate that leadership serves not merely as a supervisory practice but rather as a strategic organizational resource that encourages employee retention by strengthening the enduring worth of the employment relationship.

The Influence of Work Environment on Continuance Commitment among Public Junior High School Teachers in Salatiga City

The findings strongly support H3, indicating that work environment represents one of the strongest organizational predictors of teachers' continuance commitment. This finding suggests that teachers' decisions to remain within their current institutions are shaped not only by individual characteristics but also by the organizational resources and relational benefits embedded in their daily work environment. A supportive work environment characterized by positive interpersonal relationships, adequate resources, psychological safety, and a constructive organizational climate provides valuable professional and social resources that may be difficult to reproduce in alternative workplaces (Dong et al., 2024; San-Martín et al., 2020).

This finding is consistent with previous studies demonstrating that supportive work environments contribute to teachers' organizational commitment by enhancing workplace support, professional relationships, and perceptions of organizational value (Neziri, 2021; Opolot et al., 2026; San-Martín et al., 2020; Saputra et al., 2025). From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), favorable working conditions signal organizational investments in employees and strengthen their perceptions of the value of the employment relationship (Ahmad et al., 2023). Through continuous interaction with supportive organizational conditions, teachers gradually develop valuable relational networks, collaborative routines, institutional familiarity, and contextual knowledge that become embedded within their current workplace (İnce & Tikkanen, 2025). These accumulated organizational resources represent important benefits associated with remaining in the institution, whereas leaving the organization may require teachers to rebuild similar professional and social resources in a new environment. Consequently, a supportive work environment increases teachers perceived switching costs associated with organizational departure (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

This mechanism explains why work environment contributes to continuance commitment. Unlike affective commitment, that primarily denotes emotional bonding and alignment with an institution, continuance commitment relies on individuals' evaluations of the potential costs and consequences linked to departing (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Thakur et al., 2026). Therefore, teachers may remain in their current institutions not only because they experience positive workplace conditions but also because departure would involve the loss of accumulated professional and social resources that support their effectiveness, stability, and adaptation within the school environment (Neziri, 2021). These findings extend previous research by demonstrating that work environment functions not merely as a contextual factor influencing job satisfaction and workplace well-being (Neziri, 2021; San-Martín et al., 2020), but also as an organizational resource that strengthens continuance commitment by increasing teachers perceived value of remaining and the perceived costs associated with organizational departure (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Motivation as a Boundary Condition in Shaping Teachers' Continuance Commitment

The findings support H4, indicating that motivation positively influences teachers' continuance commitment. This outcome implies that motivated teachers have a greater tendency to remain within their current institutions because they perceive greater value in sustaining their professional roles and organizational membership. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, professional drive provides an inward mental energy that encourages individuals to persist in goal-directed behavior despite workplace challenges

(Ryan & Deci, 2000). Teachers with higher inner drive are therefore highly inclined to invest continuous energy into their occupational responsibilities, strengthen their attachment to their work, and recognize the long-term benefits of maintaining organizational membership (Abdi et al., 2024; Ateş & Türk, 2022). Consequently, motivation contributes directly to continuance commitment by reinforcing teachers' evaluations that remaining within the current institution represents a valuable professional choice (Ateş & Türk, 2022).

More importantly, the moderation analysis demonstrates that motivation does not operate as a uniform strengthening mechanism across all antecedents of continuance commitment. Instead, its moderating role varies depending on the nature of the organizational resource under consideration. Specifically, motivation did not significantly moderate the association linking competence to continuance commitment (H5), negatively moderated the tie connecting leadership and continuance commitment (H6), and positively strengthened the pathway between work environment and continuance commitment (H7). These outcomes reveal that motivation functions as a boundary condition whose influence depends on whether teachers' retention decisions are primarily derived from accumulated individual resources, relational organizational resources, or broader organizational conditions.

The non-significant interaction between competence and motivation suggests that the contribution of competence to continuance commitment remains relatively stable regardless of teachers' motivational levels. Competence represents accumulated human capital developed through professional learning, teaching experience, and continuous skill development (Vijh et al., 2022). Because these professional investments retain their value irrespective of teachers' motivational conditions, motivation appears to exert little influence on the relationship between competence and continuance commitment (Abakah, 2023; Owan et al., 2022). This finding suggests that the retention value of accumulated professional competence is sufficiently robust to operate independently of teachers' internal motivational states.

In contrast, motivation negatively altered the association linking leadership to continuance commitment, indicating that the positive influence of leadership becomes weaker as teachers' motivation increases. One possible explanation is that highly motivated teachers rely more strongly on their intrinsic motivation and professional self-regulation when making employment decisions (John, 2025; Uysal, 2023), thereby reducing their dependence on leadership as an external source of guidance and organizational support (Nuchpramool et al., 2025). Conversely, teachers with lower motivation may depend more heavily on supportive leadership to reinforce the value of remaining within their institutions (Collie, 2023). This finding is consistent with the Substitutes for Leadership perspective, which argues that individual characteristics may substitute for certain leadership functions under

particular conditions (Kerr & Jermier, 1978). Accordingly, leadership appears to function as a compensatory organizational resource that becomes particularly influential when teachers possess relatively limited motivational resources.

A different pattern emerged for work environment. The positive moderating effect indicates that motivation strengthens the contribution of work environment to continuance commitment. Teachers with higher motivation are more likely to recognize, utilize, and benefit from supportive organizational conditions, including positive collegial relationships, psychological safety, and adequate workplace resources (Chiriac et al., 2024; Utomo et al., 2024). Consequently, favorable work environments become increasingly valuable for motivated teachers because they provide opportunities to maximize professional performance and long-term career development (Opolot et al., 2026; San-Martín et al., 2020). Rather than functioning independently, motivation and work environment appear to complement one another in reinforcing teachers' decisions to remain within their current schools.

Collectively, these findings extend previous research by demonstrating that motivation should not be viewed as a universal moderator that uniformly strengthens organizational relationships. Instead, its moderating influence depends on the type of resource shaping continuance commitment. Motivation appears to exert minimal influence on the retention value of accumulated human capital (competence) (Abakah, 2023), substitute part of the influence of relational organizational resources (leadership) (Amoah et al., 2021), and amplify the benefits derived from organizational contextual resources (work environment) (San-Martín et al., 2020). This differentiated pattern advances the understanding of continuance commitment by highlighting that employees' motivational conditions shape how different organizational resources contribute to organizational retention rather than simply strengthening all relationships in a similar manner.

This study extends the understanding of continuance commitment by demonstrating that retention decisions are shaped not only by perceived costs of leaving but also by the accumulated value of individual and organizational resources. By integrating competence, leadership, and work environment within a single framework, this study provides a more comprehensive explanation of how professional investments, relational support, and workplace conditions jointly contribute to teachers' continuance commitment (Ateş & Türk, 2022; Xiu et al., 2026; Xu & Pang, 2024; Zamroni & Erwansyah, 2026). Furthermore, this study advances the understanding of motivation as a differential boundary condition rather than a universal strengthening mechanism. The findings reveal that motivation interacts differently with distinct antecedents of continuance commitment, strengthening the role of work environment while reducing the relative contribution of leadership. This finding highlights that motivational resources influence how employees perceive and utilize

organizational resources in making retention decisions, offering a more nuanced perspective on commitment formation in educational HRM contexts.

CONCLUSION

This investigation offers practical perspectives on the determinants of an educator's continuance commitment by integrating individual resources, organizational conditions, and the interactive function of occupational drive. The results demonstrate that teacher competence, administrative guidance, work environment, and motivation significantly contribute to continuance commitment, indicating that teachers' retention decisions are shaped by accumulated professional investments and perceived organizational support. Furthermore, this study extends the understanding of work motivation by demonstrating its context-dependent moderating role. Motivation strengthens the association connecting workplace climate and continuance commitment while weakening the influence of leadership, suggesting that its effect depends on the organizational context in which it operates.

From a managerial perspective, school leaders should treat teacher competence development and supportive work environments as strategic investments for strengthening retention. Continuous professional development, adequate resources, and a positive organizational climate can enhance teachers' perceived value of remaining within their institutions. In addition, leadership practices should be adapted to teachers' motivational conditions by combining empowerment and professional growth opportunities with appropriate guidance and developmental support.

This study is subject to several methodological constraints. The cross-sectional framework restricts the capacity to track variations in continuance commitment across extended periods. Subsequent studies may implement multi-wave approaches to capture the development of professional investments and motivational conditions throughout teachers' careers. Moreover, as this research concentrated on state middle school teachers within a localized geographical context, future studies should test the model across different educational settings and regions. The use of multi-source data is additionally suggested to minimize possible common method variance and provide a broader understanding of teacher commitment formation.

DECLARATIONS

Author Contribution

Amalia, M.R., Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Visualization, and Project Administration; **Dwiatmadja, C.**, Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing, Supervision, and

Project Administration; **Santoso, D.**, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing, Supervision, and Critical Revision of the Manuscript.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Declaration of AI Use

In developing this paper, ChatGPT was employed exclusively to elevate the prose and structural readability. This software served merely as a supplemental editing resource under direct human guidance. The researchers retain absolute ownership and bear ultimate liability regarding all empirical findings, discussions, and deductions provided herein.

Additional Information

Ethical approval was secured from the appropriate authority before gathering information. All respondents were briefed on the investigation's aims and voluntarily participated in the research. The privacy and identity protection of respondents were strictly upheld during the entire investigation. The datasets underpinning these results can be requested from the primary researcher following a valid inquiry.

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