

Enhancing Organizational Commitment through Effective Leadership in Higher Education: the mediating role of job satisfaction

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**ABSTRACT**

Enhancing organizational commitment in higher education can be achieved through effective leadership, with job satisfaction serving as a key mediating factor that influences the strength of this relationship, emphasizing the importance of leadership strategies that foster positive work environments.

The study highlights the significant relationship between leadership styles, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment among academic staff in Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia public universities. The findings reveal that leadership, especially transactional, laissez-faire, and transformational styles, is critical in influencing organizational commitment. Notably, job satisfaction was identified as a partial mediator in this relationship, indicating that while leadership styles directly impact commitment, they also do so through their effect on job satisfaction. To improve retention and create a supportive work environment, it is recommended that higher education leaders adopt flexible and participatory leadership styles tailored to specific institutional needs. Universities can achieve long-term success and institutional growth by enhancing job satisfaction and fostering a committed academic workforce.

This study aimed to examine the effect of leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) on organizational commitment, and to explore the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment among academic staff at a public university in the Amhara region of Ethiopia. This study employed a quantitative research approach with an explanatory design. A proportional stratified sampling method was

used to select a sample of 650 academic staff members from five public universities. Primary data were collected using three standardized Likert-scale questionnaires: the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ), and the Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (JSQ). Regression analysis was employed to analyze the data. The results of the regression analysis revealed that leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-fair) significantly predict and are positively associated with organizational commitment. Additionally, the mediation analysis showed that job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment among academic staff at the sampled universities. Therefore, it is recommended that higher education leaders adopt more flexible and participatory leadership styles which are inclusive and empowering and enhance organizational commitment by fostering a sense of belonging and ownership among academic staff.

**Keywords:** Leadership style, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, significant relationship

## **Introduction**

In today's rapidly evolving corporate landscape, effective leadership is crucial for navigating complexities, fostering innovation, and driving organizational success. Leaders must possess a blend of strong interpersonal skills, strategic vision, and adaptability to inspire teams, enhance productivity, and respond to market demands. By cultivating a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement, proficient leaders can align their teams with the organization's goals, ensuring both resilience and growth amidst fierce competition (Gutterman 2024). Effective

leadership is crucial for organizational success as it sets the vision, inspires and motivates employees, fosters a positive work culture, and enables collaboration and innovation. Strong leaders not only communicate goals clearly but also empower their teams, adapt to change, and make strategic decisions that align with the organization's mission (Sharma, Dhiman, and Srivastava 2023). This ability to navigate challenges and harness collective strengths ultimately drives performance and sustainability, making leadership a pivotal factor in determining an organization's trajectory (Saputra et al. 2024). This

definition emphasizes the relational and motivational aspects of leadership, highlighting the importance of influence and collaboration in guiding individuals or teams towards a shared vision. Effective leaders inspire and engage others, fostering an environment where goals can be achieved collectively. By focusing on willingness rather than mere obligation, this perspective underscores the significance of building trust and aligning interests for sustained success (Mazzetti and Schaufeli 2022).

Leadership is fundamentally about guiding and inspiring individuals or teams to align with shared objectives, fostering collaboration and motivation in the process. It encompasses the ability to articulate a clear vision, communicate strategies effectively, and engage others in both planning and execution, while also providing the necessary support to enhance individual and collective performance towards achieving those goals (Bond 2015). Leadership style encompasses the methods and strategies used by leaders to guide their teams, implement plans, and inspire employees toward the attainment of organizational objectives. It reflects the leader's values and personality, influencing how they communicate, delegate tasks, and foster a work environment, ultimately

impacting team dynamics and performance (Imran et al. 2025). Leadership style reflects a leader's unique blend of personal attributes, communication techniques, decision-making processes, and interpersonal dynamics that shape how they guide and influence their team. It encompasses various approaches, such as transformational, transactional, democratic, and autocratic styles, each impacting team morale, productivity, and organizational culture differently (Stanley 2024). Effective leaders adapt their style to meet the needs of their team and the challenges they face, fostering an environment conducive to collaboration and growth. Indeed, leadership style plays a crucial role in shaping organizational culture and dynamics. A supportive and inclusive leadership approach fosters trust, motivation, and open communication, which can enhance employee performance and job satisfaction. Conversely, authoritarian or disengaged leadership may lead to low morale, decreased commitment, and fragmentation within teams (Jinga et al. 2024). Ultimately, the effectiveness of an organization's leadership style is reflected in its overall unity and success. This study examines transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles, highlighting how

each approach influences team dynamics and organizational success. Transformational leadership emphasizes inspiration and change, fostering an environment of motivation and innovation; transactional leadership focuses on structured rewards and penalties, promoting efficiency and performance through clear expectations; while laissez-faire leadership allows for autonomy and minimal oversight, which can empower individuals but may also lead to a lack of direction (Muttalib, Danish, and Zehri 2023). Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of these styles can provide valuable insights for effective management and leadership development. Transformational leaders cultivate an environment of innovation and enthusiasm by encouraging collaboration and personal growth, whereas transactional leaders maintain order and efficiency through a structured approach that emphasizes accountability and performance-based incentives. Both leadership styles have their strengths, catering to different organizational needs and contexts, with transformational leaders driving long-term change and engagement, while transactional leaders ensure day-to-day operations are met effectively (Mekonnen and Bayissa 2023). Laissez-faire leaders take a hands-off

approach, allowing team members significant autonomy in their work. This leadership style encourages creativity and self-direction, as it fosters an environment where employees feel trusted to make decisions. However, it may lead to a lack of direction and coordination if team members are not self-motivated or lack the necessary skills, potentially resulting in decreased productivity or accountability (Zheng and Li 2024). Overall, while it can empower individuals, the effectiveness of laissez-faire leadership largely depends on the characteristics of the team and the context in which it is applied. Indeed, transformational leadership is often linked to increased organizational commitment due to its focus on inspiring and motivating employees, fostering an inclusive environment, and promoting personal development. By empowering team members and creating strong emotional connections, transformational leaders not only enhance job satisfaction but also reinforce loyalty and dedication to the organization, resulting in improved overall performance and lower turnover rates (Hamze and Sadiq 2025). Laissez-faire leadership can lead to decreased commitment among team members as it often results in ambiguity regarding roles and responsibilities,

fostering a sense of disengagement when guidance and support are minimal. Without clear direction, employees may feel less motivated and accountable, as they may struggle to align their efforts with organizational goals, ultimately impacting team cohesion and productivity (Kamal, Ridwan, and Kesuma 2024).

**Organizational Commitment:** The strength of an individual's attachment to and involvement within a specific organization is often referred to as organizational commitment. This concept encompasses various dimensions, including emotional attachment, identification with the organization's goals, and a willingness to exert effort for the organization's success. High levels of organizational commitment can lead to increased job satisfaction, lower turnover rates, and improved overall performance, as individuals develop a sense of loyalty and connection to their workplace (Al-Jabari and Ghazzawi 2019). Organizational commitment can be conceptualized as a multifaceted psychological state in which employees not only endorse the core values and mission of their organization but also feel a deep personal connection to its culture and objectives. This commitment manifests through a strong belief in the organization's

vision, leading to identification with its goals and a willingness to invest effort toward achieving them. Employees with high organizational commitment demonstrate loyalty and intention to remain with the organization over time, often contributing positively to team dynamics and overall organizational performance, as they see their personal growth aligned with the success of the organization (Lo et al. 2024). Indeed, organizational commitment significantly influences employee retention and performance, as it fosters a sense of belonging and alignment with the company's values and objectives. When employees feel committed, they are more likely to exhibit higher job satisfaction, increased motivation, and a willingness to contribute to the organization's success, ultimately leading to lower turnover rates and enhanced organizational effectiveness. Definitely, employees who exhibit strong organizational commitment are more likely to demonstrate loyalty and engagement, leading to reduced turnover rates and enhanced productivity. Their dedication not only fosters a positive work environment but also drives innovation and improvement in processes, contributing to the organization's overall success and efficiency in achieving its goals (Prakash, Raja, and Kumar 2025).

**Job Satisfaction:** Job satisfaction plays a crucial role in employee performance and overall organizational effectiveness, as satisfied employees tend to be more engaged, motivated, and productive. Their positive attitudes not only enhance their own work output but also contribute to a collaborative and supportive workplace culture, leading to reduced turnover and increased loyalty, which ultimately benefits the organization as a whole. Absolutely, when employees experience job satisfaction and a positive workplace culture, they are more likely to feel valued and engaged, leading to increased productivity and commitment to their roles (Gazi et al. 2024). This reciprocal relationship fosters a sense of loyalty and encourages them to contribute their best efforts, ultimately benefiting both the individual and the organization overall. Actually, job satisfaction plays a crucial role in enhancing productivity, as satisfied employees are generally more engaged, motivated, and committed to their work. This positive mindset often leads to increased efficiency, higher quality output, and a reduced likelihood of mistakes, ultimately benefiting the organization as a whole (Regin et al. 2023). When employees feel valued and fulfilled, they are more likely to invest their skills and efforts into

their tasks, creating a more dynamic and profitable work environment. Unquestionably, satisfied employees are more likely to bring forth their best ideas and approaches, fostering a culture of creativity and innovation within the workplace. Their enhanced engagement leads to greater flexibility in adapting to change, as well as a stronger sense of loyalty to the organization. This positive dynamic not only boosts team morale but can also significantly contribute to the overall success and competitiveness of the organization (Zhenjing et al. 2022).

#### **Need for the study**

Higher education institutions (HEIs) play a crucial role in the transfer and production of knowledge by providing an environment for academic inquiry, research, and skill development. They foster critical thinking, encourage innovative approaches to problem-solving, and prepare students for professional careers, all while contributing to societal advancements through community engagement and knowledge dissemination. By embracing diverse perspectives and interdisciplinary studies, HEIs not only facilitate personal growth for individuals but also drive economic and cultural progress at local and global levels (Tomasella, Wylie, and Gill 2023). The

effectiveness and innovation of academic staff are crucial in shaping the success, vision, and mission of higher education institutions, as they directly influence the quality of education, research output, and student engagement. Their expertise, commitment, and ability to adapt to emerging educational needs not only facilitate the realization of institutional goals but also contribute to fostering a vibrant academic community that supports lifelong learning and societal advancement (Pham 2021). A positive and healthy university structure plays a crucial role in enhancing job satisfaction and fostering greater commitment among academic staff by promoting a supportive work environment, facilitating open communication, and encouraging professional development. When faculty members feel valued, heard, and empowered within their institution, they are more likely to engage in meaningful collaboration, demonstrate loyalty, and invest in their roles, ultimately contributing to better educational outcomes for students and a more vibrant academic community (Mehrad et al. 2015). Job satisfaction is crucial for fostering an engaged and productive workforce, as it directly influences employees' motivation, commitment, and overall performance.

When employees feel satisfied with their jobs, they are more likely to exhibit higher levels of creativity, collaboration, and loyalty, leading to improved organizational outcomes. Conversely, low job satisfaction can result in higher turnover rates, absenteeism, and diminished morale, ultimately hindering both individual and organizational success (Ramadan Wardiansyah, Khusniyah Indrawati, and Tri Kurniawati 2024). Therefore, organizations are increasingly prioritizing strategies to enhance job satisfaction as a means to boost employee performance and retention. In higher education, the performance of academic staff plays a crucial role in shaping students' learning experiences and overall success. Effective teaching methods, mentorship, and engagement by faculty can foster a positive learning environment, motivate students, and enhance their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Additionally, supportive academic staff can provide personalized guidance and resources, which are essential in helping students navigate challenges and achieve their educational goals, ultimately influencing retention rates and academic outcomes (Mather and Bam 2025). The commitment of teachers is indeed crucial for delivering quality education, as they not

only facilitate learning but also inspire and motivate students. A dedicated teacher goes beyond mere instruction, fostering an engaging and supportive environment that encourages intellectual curiosity and personal growth. Their passion and commitment can uplift the educational experience, adapt teaching methods to meet diverse student needs, and instill a lifelong love of learning, demonstrating that the impact of committed educators is foundational to successful educational outcomes (Tuğrul Mart 2013). In developing countries, strong leadership is crucial for fostering high levels of organizational commitment, as it sets the tone for a positive workplace culture and motivates employees to align with organizational goals. Effective leaders can inspire trust, communicate a clear vision, and provide support, which helps to engage employees and reduce turnover. Additionally, understanding local contexts and challenges allows leaders to tailor their approaches, making them more relevant and impactful. By prioritizing employee well-being, professional development, and inclusive practices, leaders can cultivate a loyal and committed workforce, essential for sustainable organizational success in these regions (Sihite et al. 2024). A leader's role in

fostering employee commitment through accountability revolves around setting clear expectations, providing support, and holding individuals responsible for their actions and performance. By establishing a culture of accountability, leaders encourage team members to take ownership of their work, align their goals with organizational objectives, and foster trust and transparency (Jerab and Mabrouk 2023). This not only enhances motivation and engagement but also creates a sense of belonging, ultimately leading to higher levels of commitment and productivity within the team. An academic administrator fosters a sense of belonging among teachers by promoting inclusivity and valuing their contributions, which in turn enhances their motivation and commitment to the institution. By recognizing and supporting teachers' needs and facilitating collaboration, administrators create an environment that encourages professional development and efficient work, ultimately benefiting the entire educational community (Melzak et al. 2025). Effective leadership in educational institutions is crucial as it not only inspires and motivates teachers but also fosters a positive learning environment that promotes student achievement. Leaders with strong soft skills, such as communication, empathy,

and conflict resolution, can build collaborative teams, facilitate professional development, and navigate challenges effectively. By prioritizing these interpersonal skills, educational leaders enhance the overall organizational culture, driving excellence in education and contributing to the institution's long-term success (Javed 2023).

Academic staff are essential to the success of a university's vision and mission as they are directly responsible for shaping the educational experience, conducting research, and fostering an environment of intellectual curiosity and innovation. Their expertise and engagement influence curriculum development, mentorship, and student outcomes, aligning with the institution's goals. Moreover, their commitment to academic excellence and community involvement can enhance the university's reputation and impact, making them key stakeholders in realizing the institution's strategic objectives (Keefe 2022). Many educational researchers and policymakers argue that high-quality academic staff are the foundation of a successful education system. They emphasize that skilled teachers and professors not only deliver content effectively but also inspire and motivate students, foster critical thinking, and adapt

to diverse learning needs. Studies have shown that the presence of experienced and well-trained educators correlates positively with student achievement, engagement, and overall school performance. The effectiveness of academic staff in teaching and research directly influences student engagement, satisfaction, and academic success, which in turn shapes the reputation and performance of higher education institutions (Munna and Kalam 2021). High-quality instruction and innovative research capabilities not only enhance the learning experience but also prepare students for future challenges, thereby contributing to the overall advancement of society and the economy. The satisfaction and commitment of academic staff play a crucial role in creating a positive educational atmosphere, thereby enhancing student learning and supporting institutional success. Engaged faculty contribute to innovative teaching, collaborative research, and effective mentorship, which collectively improve academic performance and the institution's reputation. Therefore, prioritizing their well-being and professional development is essential, particularly in the context of evolving higher education, as their performance significantly impacts student outcomes. Understanding the interplay

between leadership style, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment is vital for fostering a thriving academic community (Serdyukov 2017).

This study aims to explore how different leadership styles influence the organizational commitment and job satisfaction of academic staff at a public university in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, highlighting the crucial role that effective leadership plays in fostering a committed and satisfied academic workforce essential for the institution's vision and goals.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The success of higher education institutions hinges on leadership's capacity to inspire and engage faculty and staff. Effective leaders foster a supportive and collaborative environment, encouraging innovation and professional growth while aligning individual goals with the institution's mission. By promoting open communication, recognizing accomplishments, and involving staff in decision-making processes, leaders not only enhance job satisfaction but also drive commitment to the institution's objectives, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes and a thriving academic community (Abid et al. 2025). The leadership style has a significant impact on

an organization's ability to achieve its goals, as it shapes the workplace culture and influences employee morale. Transformational leaders, for instance, inspire and motivate their teams, fostering a sense of belonging and commitment, which can lead to increased productivity and job satisfaction. Conversely, authoritarian styles may hinder innovation and employee engagement, ultimately affecting overall organizational success. Therefore, adapting leadership approaches to suit the needs of employees and organizational objectives is crucial for achieving desired outcomes (Jha and Malviya 2017). In public universities, retaining a committed workforce is essential for competitiveness, as faculty and staff are key drivers of academic quality, innovation, and student satisfaction. Strategies such as fostering a positive work culture, offering professional development opportunities, and providing competitive benefits can enhance employee engagement and loyalty. By prioritizing workforce retention, universities can establish a stable and experienced team that supports institutional goals and improves overall performance, thereby distinguishing themselves in a crowded educational landscape (Osman and Alwi 2025).

Academic staff are crucial to the success of higher education institutions, as they not only impart knowledge and conduct research but also foster an engaging learning environment, mentor students, and drive institutional innovation. Their expertise and commitment significantly influence student outcomes and the overall effectiveness of educational programs, thereby directly aligning with and advancing the institution's mission and objectives (Sulaiman and Abdulla 2024). Committed employees not only demonstrate a strong engagement with their work but also possess qualities that foster growth and innovation within an organization. Their intellectual curiosity and passion for learning encourage them to seek out new information and develop skills that enhance their performance. By challenging the status quo, they promote a culture of continuous improvement, while their drive to experiment with innovative strategies allows them to contribute creative solutions to problems, ultimately benefiting both their personal development and the organization's success (Akanpaadgi and Binpimbu 2021). This level of commitment fosters a culture of excellence and innovation, enabling organizations to excel in customer satisfaction, employee engagement, and operational efficiency. Prioritizing

commitment and responsibility enables these businesses to quickly adjust to changes in the market, foster strong brand loyalty, and eventually achieve sustainable growth. In contrast, rival businesses contend that they cannot accomplish their goals without the commitment of their workforce (Riza, Hutahayan, and Chong 2025). The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. The emphasis on the commitment and qualifications of academic staff highlights their critical role in maintaining the long-term quality and performance of tertiary institutions, as their dedication directly influences educational outcomes and institutional success (Kassaw and Golga 2019).

A positive and supportive university climate is crucial as it significantly boosts job satisfaction and motivation among academic staff, which in turn leads to enhanced learning outcomes for students and increased productivity overall. This environment encourages collaboration, innovation, and a strong sense of community, allowing educators to thrive and effectively support student success (Fang and Qi 2023). The rapid expansion of the higher education sector in Ethiopia is characterized by a significant rise in the establishment of universities, diversification

of academic programs, and the introduction of advanced educational levels, reflecting the nation's commitment to improving access to education and fostering a skilled workforce. This growth, while promising for development, also presents challenges such as ensuring quality education, addressing disparities in access, and effectively managing resources (Tareke et al. 2024). The growth in the academic community has indeed brought about various challenges, including increased competition for funding and resources, pressures to publish frequently, and a heightened demand for interdisciplinary collaboration. Additionally, institutions face issues related to mental health and burnout among faculty and students, navigating the complexities of remote and hybrid learning environments, and addressing disparities in access and equity (Blessing 2024). These factors can strain academic relationships and impact the overall quality of education and research output. Research on the factors influencing educational quality in Ethiopia, particularly in the wake of this expansion, reveals significant issues. The growth of Ethiopia's educational system has led to poor quality across all levels, from primary to tertiary education, largely due to low job satisfaction and staff commitment. High turnover rates

are a direct consequence of these issues. Employee turnover leads to increased workloads for remaining staff, resulting in diminished morale, heightened stress, and higher absenteeism. The consequences of high academic staff turnover are particularly severe, including reduced teaching quality and diminished student performance. This underscores the pressing need for quality assurance mechanisms in Ethiopia's higher education system. However, improving educational quality cannot be achieved without addressing the retention of academic staff. Retaining staff requires the implementation of effective strategies to enhance leadership practices, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction all of which play a critical role in motivating staff to stay within the institution. Previous research on the relationship between leadership style, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction in educational institutions and other sectors in Ethiopia was conducted by different researchers. All found inconsistencies in the relationships between variables. These inconsistencies indicate a need for further investigation into how leadership styles influence organizational commitment and job satisfaction within Ethiopian public

universities. This study seeks to address this gap in the literature (Tamrat 2022).

Moreover, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no comprehensive studies have explored the relationship between leadership style, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction in Ethiopia, specifically in public universities in Amhara Regional State. This research aims to examine these dynamics among academic staff at selected public universities in the Amhara Region, contributing new insights to the existing body of literature.

#### **General objective:**

The primary objective of this study is to examine the effect of leadership styles, specifically Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-fair on organizational commitment. Additionally, the study aims to explore the role of job satisfaction as a mediator in the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment among academic staff at selected public universities in Amhara Regional State of Ethiopia.

#### **The specific objectives of the study are to:**

- ✓ Examine the effect of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles on academic staff organizational

commitment at selected public universities in Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia.

- ✓ Investigate the role of job satisfaction as a mediator in the relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment among academic staff at selected public universities in Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia.

#### **Hypotheses of the Study**

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses are developed and stated in their alternative forms:

**H1:** Leadership styles (Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-faire) have a significant positive effect on academic staff organizational commitment in selected public universities in Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia.

**H2:** Job satisfaction has a mediating role on the relationship between leadership style and academic staff organizational commitment in selected public universities in Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia.

#### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was developed based on a comprehensive review of existing literature. It illustrates the

relationships between transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles, organizational commitment, and the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment. This framework

provides a structured approach to understanding how different leadership styles influence organizational commitment, with job satisfaction serving as a key mediator.

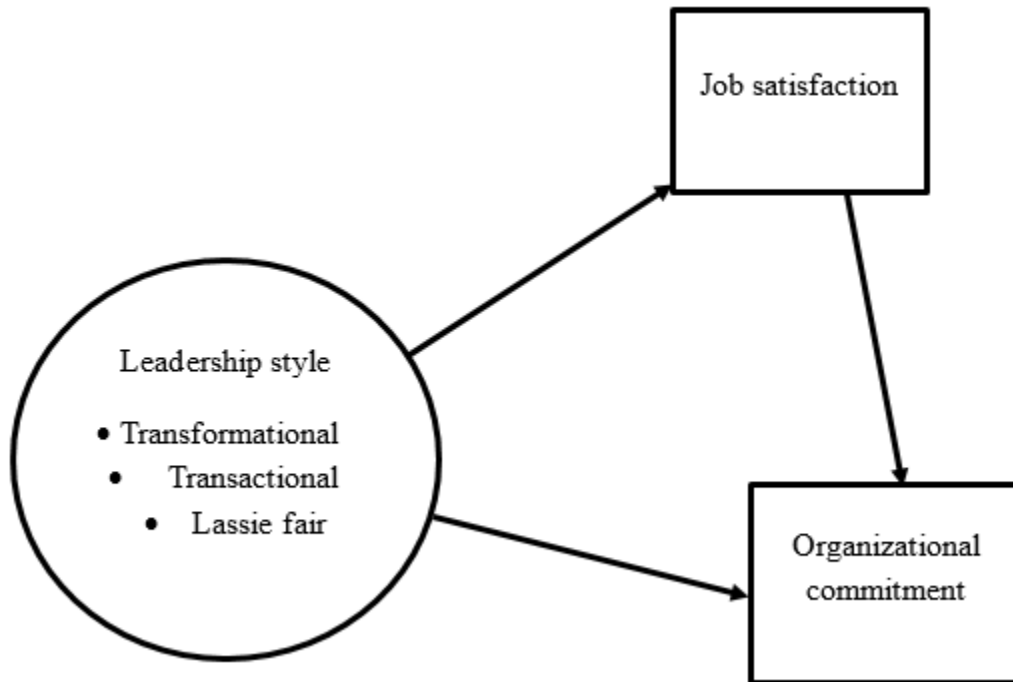


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the study developed by the researcher after reviewing previous studies (2024)

## Research Methodology

### Research Design

The objective of this study is to explain the cause-and-effect relationships among the variables and to test the hypotheses. Therefore, an explanatory research design was employed. This design is appropriate for understanding how and why leadership

styles influence organizational commitment, as well as the mediating role of job satisfaction in this relationship. By using an explanatory approach, the study aims to establish clear connections between the variables under investigation.

### Research approach

This study employed a quantitative research approach to examine the effect of leadership

styles on organizational commitment and to explore the role of job satisfaction in mediating the relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment. A quantitative approach was chosen to allow for the systematic measurement and analysis of the relationships among the variables, providing statistical evidence to support or refute the proposed hypotheses.

**Target population of the study**

The target population for this study consisted of academic staff from five public universities in Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia, with a total of 7,510 academic staff members employed across these institutions.

**Sampling Techniques**

The study employed a combination of purposive and proportional stratified sampling techniques. Proportional stratified sampling was used to select academic staff (subordinates) from different strata within the universities, ensuring that the sample represented the various subgroups in

proportion to their size. Purposive sampling was applied to select key individuals, including department heads, vice deans, and officers, based on their specific roles and expertise. This dual approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the leadership's impact on organizational commitment, while also capturing insights into the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment.

**Sample Size determination**

For this study, the sample size was determined using Yamane (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where N = total population size, n = sample size, and e = desired level of precision=0.05  
Then n=7510/ (1+7510 (0.05)2) =380

Then the following formula was used to select a sample from each stratum of population size.

$$Ns = (D1 / N) * n$$

Ns=sample size for each stratum  
N = Total Number of populations, D1= Population size of the strata, n = sample size.

**Table 1.** Proportionate stratified sampling and percentage determination

Stratum	Population	Formula	Samples size from each stratum	Percentage (%)
Strata 1	2500	(2500/ 7510) * 380= 127	127	33.4 %
Strata 2	1450	(1450/ 7510) * 380= 73	73	19.2 %
Strata 3	1350	(1350/ 7510) * 380 = 68	68	17.9 %

Strata 4	1260	$(1260/ 7510) * 380 = 64$	64	16.9 %
Strata 5	950	$(950/ 7510) * 380 = 48$	48	12.6 %
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>7510</b>		<b>380</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Source: Survey data, 2024, own computation

Furthermore, 140 department heads, 80 college vice deans, and 50 officers were purposely included in the study as a sample to see the overview of all academic staff about the leadership style in the study area. As a result, the total sample size for this study was  $380+ 270=650$  samples.

**Data Sources and Collection Methods**

Both primary and secondary data were utilized in this study: Primary data were collected through standardized questionnaires using a Likert scale to assess the responses of academic staff at five public universities. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), developed by Bass and Avolio (1997), was used to measure leadership styles. Job satisfaction was evaluated using the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS), created by Paul E. Spector (1994) which assesses nine dimensions of job satisfaction. Organizational commitment was measured using the 18-item revised questionnaire developed by Meyer, Allen, and Smith (2004). All variables were scored on a 5-

point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 5 ("Strongly agree") (Limsila and Ogunlana 2008).

Secondary data were gathered from relevant articles, books, and previous studies to support the research framework and provide a broader context for the findings. These were collected through document analysis. This mixed-method approach allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the variables under investigation, ensuring both depth and reliability in the data collection process.

**Data Analysis Methods**

Data analysis was conducted using inferential statistics, specifically multiple regression analysis and a path analysis model. The statistical software SPSS (version 23) was employed to process the quantitative data.

Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses and examine the effect of leadership styles (independent variables) on organizational commitment (dependent variable). Additionally, a path analysis

model was applied to investigate the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment. This model allowed for a detailed understanding of how job satisfaction influences the direct and indirect effects of leadership styles on organizational commitment.

Together, these statistical techniques enabled a robust examination of the relationships between the key variables and provided insights into the mechanisms underlying the effects of leadership style on organizational commitment.

**Specifications for the Model**

The following multiple regress model was used in the study:

$$OC = f(\text{Leadership style})$$

$$\text{Leadership style} = TFLs + TRLs + LALs$$

$$OC = \beta_0 + \beta_1 TFLs + \beta_2 TRLs + \beta_3 LALs + \varepsilon$$

**Where**

OC = organizational commitment

TFLs = Transformational leadership style

TRLs = Transactional leadership style

LALs= laissez-faire leadership style

$\varepsilon$  = random error term

$\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$ , and  $\beta_3$  are coefficients of transformational leadership style, transactional leadership style, and laissez-faire leadership style.

**Results and Discussion**

Multiple regression analysis was used to estimate the effect of the independent variables, transformational leadership style, transactional leadership style, and laissez-faire leadership style on the dependent variable, organizational commitment. This analysis allowed for the assessment of the individual and combined contributions of each leadership style to organizational commitment, helping to identify which leadership style had the most significant influence on staff commitment within the selected public universities.

Table 2. Model Summary results of a Multiple Regression Analysis of Leadership Style on Organizational Commitment.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.840 <sup>a</sup>	.730	.600	1.63185	1.871

Source: own computation from survey result, 2024

a. Predictors: (Constant), Liassizefair, Transformational, Transactional

Dependent Variables: Organizational commitment

The Model Summary in table 2 presents the coefficient of correlation (R-value), which is 0.840, or 84%. This indicates a strong positive correlation between the independent variables (transformational leadership style, transactional leadership style, and laissez-faire leadership style) and the dependent variable (organizational commitment). The

R-squared value reveals that 73% of the variation in organizational commitment can be explained by the combined effects of the three leadership styles. This suggests that the leadership styles collectively have a substantial influence on organizational commitment, with the model accounting for a significant proportion of the variation in staff commitment levels within the selected public universities.

Table 3. Coefficients of leadership style on organizational commitment

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.222	.107		11.457	.000
Transformational	.120	.030	.149	4.016	.000
Transactional	.279	.036	.312	7.776	.000
Liassizefair	.192	.024	.285	7.956	.000

Dependent Variable: organizational Commitment

Source: own computation from survey result, 2024

The unstandardized coefficients presented in table 3 indicate the amount by which the dependent variable (organizational commitment) changes with each independent variable, holding all other variables constant.

The results show that transactional leadership style has the greatest effect on organizational commitment, with a coefficient of  $\beta = 0.279$ . This suggests that

for every one-unit increase in transactional leadership style, organizational commitment increases by 0.279, after controlling for the effects of the other leadership styles.

The laissez-faire leadership style was the second most influential predictor, with a coefficient of  $\beta = 0.192$ . This indicates that for each one-unit increase in laissez-faire leadership style, organizational commitment increases by 0.192.

Transformational leadership style contributed the least to the variation in organizational commitment, with a coefficient of  $\beta = 0.120$ . This means that a one-unit increase in transformational leadership style is associated with a 0.120 increase in organizational commitment, when the other variables are held constant.

These findings are in line with those of Kawiana, et al. (2021) and Al-Daibat, (2017), who found that leadership styles positively and significantly impact organizational commitment.

Based on the coefficient values, a multiple regression equation was developed to predict organizational commitment based on the three leadership styles.

$$\text{Organizational Commitment} = 1.222 + 0.120 (\text{transformational leadership style}) + 0.279 (\text{transactional leadership style}) + 0.192 (\text{laissez-faire leadership style}) + \epsilon$$

### **Testing Mediation with Regression Analysis**

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), a four-step approach is proposed in which several regression analyses are conducted and the significance of the coefficients is examined at each step to determine the mediating effect of variables.

X denotes leadership style, which is an independent variable.

Y = Organizational commitment –dependent variable

M=Job Satisfaction–Mediating Variable

### **According to Baron and Kenny (1986), mediation conditions**

1. X-should be related to Y
2. X- should be related to M.
3. M-should be related to Y

### **Guide lines for interpretation of mediation results**

1. If the relationship between X and Y remains significant and unchanged after M is included in the X and Y model, mediation is not supported.
2. Partial mediation is supported if the relationship between X and Y is reduced but still significant when M is included as a mediator.
3. Full mediation is supported if the relationship between X and Y is reduced to the point where it is no longer statistically significant after M is included as a mediating construct.

Analyzing the mediating effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment

### **Interpretation of mediation results**

In the first step of the analysis, the direct effect of leadership style on organizational commitment was examined by regressing leadership style against organizational commitment. The results revealed a significant positive effect ( $\beta = 0.528$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), indicating that leadership style is a strong predictor of organizational commitment.

In step 2, the relationship between leadership style and the mediator, job satisfaction, was tested. The findings confirmed a significant positive effect of leadership style on job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.423$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), suggesting that leadership style plays a key role in influencing the level of job satisfaction among academic staff.

In step 3, job satisfaction was regressed as an independent variable against organizational commitment. The results revealed a significant positive effect ( $\beta = 0.618$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), indicating that higher job satisfaction is strongly associated with greater organizational commitment.

In step 4, a multiple regression analysis was performed, including both leadership style and job satisfaction as predictors of organizational commitment. The results

showed a positive and statistically significant relationship with regression coefficients of  $\beta = 0.350$  for leadership style and  $\beta = 0.420$  for job satisfaction ( $p = 0.000$ ).

However, the strength of the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment was reduced from  $\beta = 0.528$  ( $p = 0.000$ ) in the direct effect model to  $\beta = 0.350$  ( $p = 0.000$ ) after adding job satisfaction as a mediating variable. Despite this reduction, the relationship remained statistically significant ( $p = 0.000$ ), suggesting that job satisfaction partially mediates the effect of leadership style on organizational commitment.

These findings align with previous studies by Girma & Tesfaye (2018), Khan et al. (2017), Sakiru et al. (2018), and Halim et al. (2021), Aheruddin, et al. (2024). which also found that job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment. This study confirms that while job satisfaction plays a significant role, it does not fully mediate the relationship, meaning that leadership style continues to have a direct impact on organizational commitment, even when job satisfaction is considered.

Table 4. Calculation of Direct, Indirect and Total Effects of mediation analysis

NO	Relationship variables	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect
1	Leadership style → Organizational commitment	0.528	-	0.528
2	Leadership style → Job satisfaction	0.423	-	0.423
3	Job satisfaction → Organizational commitment	0.618	-	0.618
4	Leadership style → Job satisfaction → Organizational commitment	0.350	<b>0.178</b>	0.528

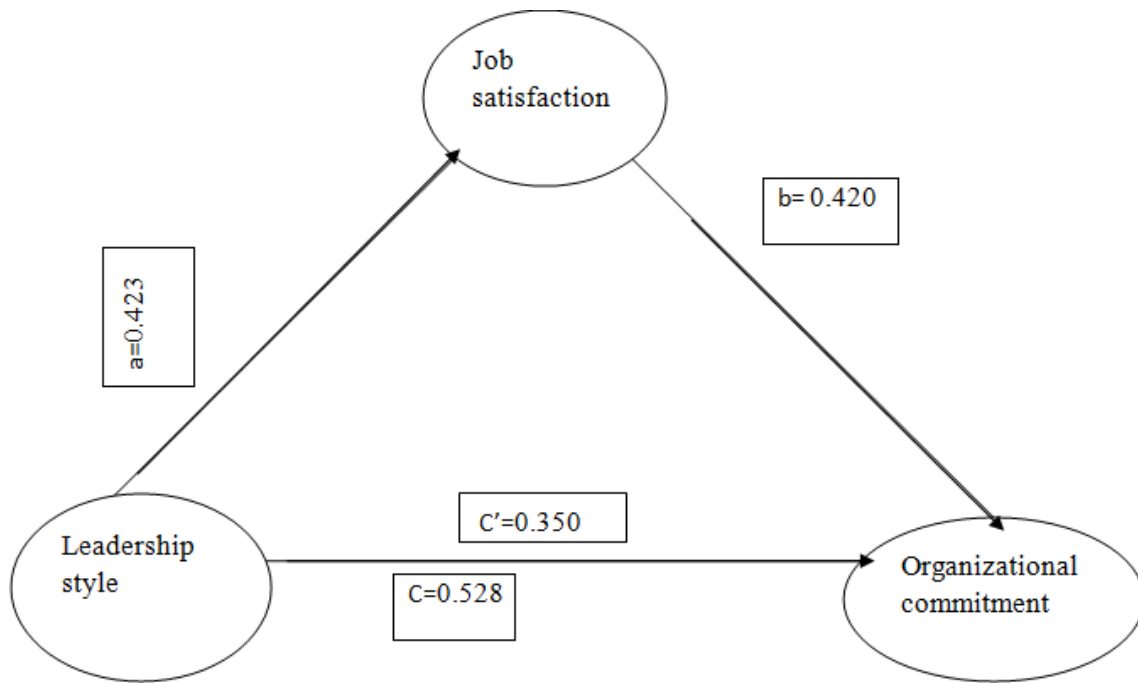


Figure 2: Summary of mediation analysis using path analysis model

1.  $C$  = Total effect of leadership style on organizational commitment.  
 $C = C' + ab$
2.  $C'$  = the direct effect of leadership style on organizational commitment after controlling for the

mediator (job satisfaction) – meaning after the mediator included in the model.

$$C' = C - ab$$

3.  $ab$  = Indirect effect of leadership style on organizational commitment

Total effect = direct effect + Indirect effect

$$C = C' + a * b$$

Without mediation total effect = **0.528**

With mediation total effect = Direct effect + Indirect effect

$$\text{Total effect} = 0.350 + (0.423)(0.420)$$

**Total Effect = 0.350 + 0.178 (Indirect effect)**

### Interpretation of hypotheses testing

This study aimed to explore the effect of leadership styles on organizational commitment and the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment. To test the hypotheses, both regression and path analysis techniques were employed.

**Hypothesis 1:** Leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) have a significant and positive effect on academic staff organizational commitment in selected public universities in Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia.

The results from the regression analysis showed that all three leadership styles, transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire, had a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment. The coefficients for each leadership style were as follows: transactional leadership ( $\beta = 0.279$ ), laissez-faire leadership ( $\beta = 0.219$ ), and transformational leadership ( $\beta = 0.120$ ). The overall model was significant, with an F-value of  $(3, 646) = 119.180$ , and a p-value of 0.000, which is well below the alpha level of 0.05. This indicates that the combination of the three leadership styles significantly and positively predicts organizational commitment. These findings support the hypothesis, confirming that leadership styles play a significant role in enhancing organizational commitment. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

**Hypothesis 2:** Job satisfaction has a mediating effect on the relationship between leadership style and academic staff organizational commitment in selected public universities in Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia.

The regression analysis revealed that job satisfaction had a positive and statistically significant effect on organizational commitment, with a regression coefficient of  $\beta = 0.420$ , and p-value of 0.000. When job

satisfaction was introduced as a mediating variable, the coefficient for the direct effect of leadership style on organizational commitment decreased from  $\beta = 0.528$ ,  $p = 0.000$  to  $\beta = 0.350$ ,  $p = 0.000$ . Although the strength of the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment was reduced, it remained significant ( $p = 0.000$ ), indicating that job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment. These results align with the hypothesis, demonstrating that

job satisfaction plays a mediating role, but does not fully explain the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment. As a result, Hypothesis 2 is accepted. The findings suggest that leadership styles significantly impact organizational commitment, and job satisfaction plays a partial mediating role in this relationship. This partial mediation implies that while job satisfaction influences organizational commitment, leadership style still directly affects commitment levels among academic staff.

Table 5. Summary of Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypotheses	Regression coefficient	P- value	Decision
<b>H1:</b> Transformational, transactional and Laissez-faire leadership styles have a significant and positive effect on academic staff organizational commitment in some selected public universities in Amhara regional state, Ethiopia.	( $\beta=0.279$ ), ( $\beta=0.192$ ), ( $\beta=0.120$ .)	P=0.000	Supported
<b>H2:</b> Job satisfaction has a mediating effect on the relationship between leadership style and academic staff organizational commitment in some selected public universities in Amhara regional state, Ethiopia.	( $\beta=0.350$ )	p=0.000	Supported

### Suggestions for Improvement

Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions are proposed to enhance organizational commitment among

academic staff in the sample public universities in Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia:

✓ Adopt flexible and participatory leadership styles

The regression analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) and organizational commitment. Therefore, it is recommended that higher education leaders adopt more flexible and participatory leadership styles. These leadership approaches, which are inclusive and empowering, can enhance organizational commitment by fostering a sense of belonging and ownership among academic staff. Such leadership practices encourage collaboration, communication, and involvement, which are crucial for cultivating a committed and motivated workforce. Leaders should also be mindful of the need to adapt their leadership styles based on the specific context and challenges faced within their institutions, as there is no one-size-fits-all approach to leadership.

✓ Tailor leadership styles to contextual needs

While leadership styles have a significant positive effect on organizational commitment, the study suggests that there is no universal leadership style that is suitable for all situations. Leaders should, therefore, assess the prevailing conditions such as

institutional culture, staff needs, and external challenges and adjust their leadership styles accordingly. A situational approach to leadership will ensure that academic staff are effectively motivated and engaged in alignment with the institution's objectives and context.

✓ Focus on enhancing job satisfaction

The mediation analysis indicated that job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment. This underscores the importance of ensuring that academic staff are satisfied with their roles, as job satisfaction plays a crucial role in fostering organizational commitment. Leaders should prioritize improving the working conditions and overall experience of their academic staff to enhance job satisfaction. This can be achieved by focusing on factors such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, growth opportunities, and motivation.

Leaders can increase job satisfaction by offering professional development opportunities, recognizing staff achievements, providing clear career advancement paths, and fostering a positive work environment. Improved job satisfaction can directly enhance academic

staff's commitment to their institutions, reducing turnover rates and fostering long-term retention.

- ✓ Create a supportive work environment

To increase the level of organizational commitment, leaders should ensure that the work environment is conducive to both personal and professional growth. This includes promoting a healthy work-life balance, offering support for academic research and innovation, and ensuring that staff members feel valued and respected. The improvement of work conditions, such as offering sufficient resources for teaching and research, can directly boost job satisfaction, which in turn strengthens organizational commitment (Nawab & Bhatti, 2011).

- ✓ Retention strategies for talented staff

To retain talented and experienced academic staff, higher education leaders should focus on improving job satisfaction. Since job satisfaction is a strong predictor of organizational commitment (Meyer et al., 2002, as cited in Nath & Agrawal, 2015), institutions must create an environment where staff members feel satisfied with their roles, valued for their contributions, and motivated to remain within the organization.

Leadership should aim to provide meaningful rewards, recognition, and growth opportunities to sustain long-term commitment.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study shed light on the intricate relationship between leadership styles, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment in public universities within Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia. The results reveal a compelling narrative of how leadership influences the academic landscape. Leadership styles, particularly transactional, laissez-faire, and transformational approaches, demonstrated a significant positive impact on organizational commitment. This underscores the critical role that effective leadership plays in fostering a dedicated and engaged academic workforce. The study's regression analysis illuminated the varying degrees of influence each leadership style exerts, with transactional leadership emerging as the most potent driver of commitment. Perhaps most intriguingly, the research uncovered the nuanced role of job satisfaction as a partial mediator in the leadership-commitment dynamic. While leadership styles directly affect organizational commitment, they also indirectly influence it

through their impact on job satisfaction. This partial mediation suggests a complex interplay between leadership practices, employee satisfaction, and institutional loyalty. These findings carry profound implications for higher education leadership. They underscore the need for a multifaceted approach to enhancing organizational commitment. Leaders must not only refine their leadership styles but also prioritize creating environments that nurture job satisfaction. To retain talented academic staff and foster long-term organizational success, leadership must adopt flexible, participatory leadership styles and focus on enhancing job satisfaction. By recognizing the role of leadership in shaping both job satisfaction and organizational commitment, leaders can improve retention, reduce turnover, and create a supportive work environment that promotes staff well-being and institutional growth.

The study advocates for flexible, context-sensitive leadership that can adapt to the unique challenges and opportunities within each institution. Moving forward, university administrators would do well to embrace a holistic strategy. This includes adopting participatory leadership practices, tailoring approaches to specific institutional needs, and implementing targeted initiatives to

boost job satisfaction. By focusing on these areas, institutions can cultivate a more committed academic staff, potentially reducing turnover and enhancing overall institutional performance. In essence, this research provides a roadmap for fostering a more engaged and committed academic community. It highlights the symbiotic relationship between leadership, satisfaction, and commitment, offering valuable insights for those at the helm of higher education institutions. As universities navigate the complexities of the modern academic landscape, understanding and leveraging these dynamics will be crucial for sustained success and excellence in higher education.

#### **Credit authorship contribution statement**

Muluken Alemu Delele: Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Methodology. Dawit Tessema Ebissa: Formal analysis, Writing – review & editing, supervision, Data curation, Resources.

#### **Availability of Data**

The data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

#### **Conflicting interests**

The author(s) declare no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship, and/or publication

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