

The Effects of Perceived School Organizational Climate on School Performance of Primary School Teachers in Shandong Province, China

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the impact of perceived school organizational climate on the work performance of primary school teachers in Shandong, China, and verify the mediating role of professional commitment. The gender, educational background, and teaching experience of teachers were included as background variables in the study. A convenience sampling method was employed to collect questionnaire data from 380 teachers across 12 elementary schools in Shandong Province, China. Findings reveal significant gender differences in perceived organizational climate, while no significant gender differences exist in work performance or career commitment. Teachers with different teaching experiences and educational backgrounds showed significant differences in perceived school organizational climate, work performance, and professional commitment. Perceived school organizational climate had a significant positive impact on work performance. Professional commitment had a significant positive impact on work performance. Professional commitment mediates the relationship between perceived organizational climate and work performance. This study validates the applicability and explanatory power of Social Cognitive Theory in the field of educational management, thereby extending its scope and providing new empirical support. In addition, it empirically tests the mediating role of professional commitment between organisational climate and work performance, offering further evidence of the theory's relevance within teachers' work environments.

Keywords: Perceived Organizational Climate, Work Performance, Career Commitment, Primary School Teachers.

1. Introduction

Teacher work performance is widely regarded as a key factor in improving educational quality, and many countries have incorporated it into major education reforms and evaluation systems (Adeniyi et al., 2024). Extensive international research has examined the profound impact of teacher performance on student learning outcomes, school governance efficiency, and educational equity (Dutta & Sahney, 2021; Kawuryan, Sayuti & Dwiningrum, 2021). In China, amid ongoing basic education reforms, the growing societal demand for high-quality education has further highlighted

the importance of teacher performance (Xue & Li, 2021). According to China's "14th Five-Year Plan" for education reform and development, the government emphasises improving teacher development and management systems through measures such as enhancing teacher welfare, strengthening workforce construction, and optimising incentive mechanisms to promote better performance in compulsory education (The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2021). However, existing studies primarily focus on teaching technologies, curriculum reforms, or institutional incentives, while lacking systematic exploration of how teachers' work performance is shaped by school organisational climate and mediated through psychological mechanisms. This gap indicates a clear deficiency in current research.

Teacher performance refers to the evaluation of both the intrinsic moral qualities demonstrated by educators in their teaching practices and the external completion of instructional tasks, including both moral performance and teaching task performance. Enhancing the performance level of elementary school teachers plays a crucial role for schools, educators, and students alike (Kumari & Kumar, 2023). Elementary students are in a stage of rapid cognitive, emotional, and social skill development. Their values and behavioral habits are not yet formed, making them susceptible to external influences (Angraini, Fitria & Setiawan, 2021). Improving the performance of primary school teachers can promote students' mental health, enhance their social adaptability, and help them build confidence and learn to cooperate (Luthar, Kumar & Zillmer, 2020).

Highly effective teachers employ innovative teaching methods and activities to enhance students' learning interest and academic performance. The inspiring and innovative teaching activities designed by teachers can stimulate students' learning motivation, thereby promoting the all-round development of their academic performance and comprehensive qualities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Beyond student development, high-performing teachers are more likely to rigorously adhere to professional ethics standards in school development. They set higher personal expectations, enforce stricter academic requirements for students, and serve as stronger role models for colleagues, thereby advancing the overall professional growth of the school's teaching community (Amtu et al., 2020). Consequently, the improvement of teachers' work enthusiasm and creativity, as well as the comprehensive level of the school and the overall quality of teachers, cannot be achieved without a high-performance teaching team (Hermita et al., 2021).

In the group of primary school teachers in Shandong Province, especially those in public schools, the phenomenon of job burnout and passive work is relatively prominent. Some educators exhibit diminished enthusiasm and reduced teaching commitment, adversely affecting educational quality. Research indicates that teachers' perception of the organizational atmosphere is related to heightened job satisfaction, professional commitment, and work motivation. Teachers' perceptions of school organizational climate can be understood as their perceptions of the school's physical and interpersonal environments (Thomas, 1976). The physical environment refers to the ease of accessing school resources, while the interpersonal environment encompasses three aspects: collaboration among teachers, teacher-student relationships, and participation in school decision-making. These perceptions influence teachers' work attitudes and behavioral performance within the school (Patterson et al., 2005). Problems within certain school environments can hinder the stimulation of teachers' work motivation

and creativity, causing them to work in a closed and lackluster environment. When teachers perceive a lack of positive organizational climate and effective management practices, they are more likely to gradually lose their enthusiasm for work.

Teacher occupational commitment refers to their internal identification, dedication, and sense of responsibility that teachers hold toward their educational profession, encompassing three dimensions: affective commitment, occupational commitment, and continuance commitment (Blau, 1985). Teachers' professional affect, shaped by their perceptions of organizational climate, influences their professional commitment. This commitment includes a genuine emotional attachment to the profession, a willingness to continue working in the field, and a strong sense of identification with the job (Khan, 2019). The impact of school climate on professional commitment ultimately manifests in teachers' work performance (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). Therefore, occupational commitment may play a mediating role between the perception of the school organizational climate and work performance.

School organizational climate is a crucial factor influencing teacher work performance. A positive school organizational climate and a supportive school culture can significantly enhance teachers' work effectiveness (Ortan, Simut & Simut, 2021). Regarding the issue of improving primary school teacher performance in Shandong Province, although existing research has explored specific mechanisms through which positive organizational climate influences teacher performance, the following limitations remain: First, there is insufficient homogeneity in the research subjects. Existing studies have not adequately examined teachers of different genders, teaching experiences, and educational backgrounds. The differences in their perceptions of school organizational climate and the heterogeneous effects on teacher performance remain unclear. This oversight may lead to one-sided research conclusions that fail to fully reflect the actual situation. Second, there is a lack of validation regarding the mediating mechanisms. Existing research indicates a significant correlation between high occupational commitment and high work performance, and that a higher perception of the school organizational climate is associated with a higher level of work performance (Balkar, 2024; Wayan Parwati et al., 2023). However, there remains a lack of in-depth empirical research and validation regarding the specific pathways and mechanisms through which professional commitment mediates the relationship between school climate and teacher performance, as well as the specific pathways and mechanisms through which improving the school climate can enhance teacher occupational commitment and indirectly improve teacher work performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Cognitive Theory

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) originated in the 1960s and emerged from the integration of cognitive psychology and social psychology (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Proposed by Bandura (1986), this theory emphasizes the triadic reciprocal interaction among individual, behavior, and environment, positing that human behavior is determined by cognitive, affective, and environmental factors. Individuals acquire experience through observation and imitation of others and adjust their behaviors under the drive of self-efficacy. In the school context, teachers' perception of the

organizational atmosphere affects their cognitive and emotional states, which in turn influence their work behavior (Collie, Granziera & Martin, 2018). A positive organizational atmosphere can enhance teachers' work motivation and professional commitment, consequently improving their work engagement and performance (Lunenburg, 2012). According to the tripartite interaction model of the Social Cognitive Theory, professional commitment, as an internal cognitive factor of individuals, plays a mediating role between environmental factors (such as organizational atmosphere perception) and behavioral outcomes (such as work performance) (Meyer, Stanley & Vandenberg, 2013; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007).

2.2. Differences in Teachers' Perception of School Organizational Atmosphere Based on Gender, Education Level, and Teaching Experience

Research indicates that female teachers often place greater emphasis on emotional support and interpersonal relationships in the work environment, leading to different perceptions and evaluations of the organizational climate (Thomas, 1976). For example, Khan (2019) found that female teachers are more sensitive to the support from school leaders and the cooperation among colleagues, and have a more positive perception of the organizational atmosphere. The educational level of teachers also affects their perception of the organizational atmosphere. According to a study on teachers in Malaysian teachers, those with higher educational qualifications tend to prefer working in environments with strong professional support and academic resources (Benevene, De Stasio & Fiorilli, 2020). Teaching experience is another important factor influencing teachers' perception of the school's organizational atmosphere. Senior teachers, due to their longer time of working in the school, may have a deeper understanding and adaptability to the school's policies and culture, and thus have a more stable and positive perception of the organizational atmosphere. Conversely, teachers with less experience might be more sensitive to the school's management style and interpersonal relationships, and their perception of the organizational climate can be more easily influenced by daily work pressures and career uncertainties (Benevene et al., 2020). Therefore, gender, education level, and teaching experience, as background variables of teachers, significantly affect teachers' perception of the organizational atmosphere. This leads to the following research hypotheses:

H1a: Chinese primary school teachers in Shandong Province have significant differences in their perception of the school's organizational atmosphere across different genders.

H1b: Chinese primary school teachers in Shandong Province have significant differences in their perception of the school's organizational atmosphere across different educational levels.

H1c: Chinese primary school teachers in Shandong Province have significant differences in their perception of the school's organizational atmosphere across different teaching experiences.

2.3. Differences in Teacher Work performance by Gender, Educational Level, and Teaching Experience

Compared to their male counterparts, female teachers typically report higher levels of work performance and demonstrate better work outcomes (Gan et al., 2025).

These gender-based differences underscore the necessity of considering the unique challenges and strengths that each gender brings to the teaching profession (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Teaching experience is a critical factor determining work performance, with experienced teachers often demonstrating superior classroom management skills, more effective instructional strategies, and greater confidence in their teaching abilities (Wahab, 2016). Research indicates that as experience increases, teachers become more adept at adapting to diverse classroom environments, positively impacting their work performance. However, even experienced teachers may struggle to keep pace with emerging educational practices without ongoing professional development (Niemi, 2021). Teachers with higher educational qualifications or specialized pedagogical training generally possess a deeper understanding of teaching theory and practice, which can enhance their effectiveness in the classroom (Jalalkamali et al., 2016). Advanced educational qualifications correlate with better preparation for implementing innovative teaching methods and engaging in reflective practices to improve instructional outcomes (Rhoades, Eisenberger & Armeli, 2001). Furthermore, continuous professional development and advanced studies help teachers meet the needs of diverse learners and integrate new instructional strategies (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2017). Understanding these factors aids in designing targeted professional development programs and support systems to enhance overall teaching performance. This leads to the following research hypothesis:

H2a: There are significant differences in work performance among primary school teachers in Shandong Province, China, based on gender.

H2b: There are significant differences in work performance among primary school teachers in Shandong Province, China, based on educational attainment.

H2c: There are significant differences in work performance among primary school teachers in Shandong Province, China, based on years of teaching experience.

2.4. Differences in Teacher Professional Commitment Based on Gender, Education Level, and Teaching Experience

Female teachers typically exhibit higher emotional commitment and normative commitment, which may be related to their greater emotional investment in their profession (Ruiz-Palomo, León-Gómez & García-Lopera, 2020). This gender difference may stem from women's increased focus on student growth and development in educational work, thereby strengthening their emotional attachment to the school and sense of professional responsibility (Khan, 2019). Teaching experience is an important factor influencing professional commitment, and teachers with longer experience tend to show higher professional commitment. The long-term career enables teachers to have a deeper emotional dependence on the school and the education cause, while also increasing willingness to exert greater effort in their work (Grillo & Kier, 2021). Moreover, as teaching experience increases, teachers' status and influence in the school also improve, which further enhances professional commitment (Khan, 2019). However, some studies have pointed out that teachers with longer tenure may experience reduced professional commitment due to burnout, necessitating greater school attention to career development and support (Nagar, 2012). The influence of educational attainment on teacher professional commitment is also significant.

Highly educated teachers typically have stronger professional commitment, mainly because highly educated teachers pursue higher professional development and a sense of achievement in their careers (Imron et al., 2020). Highly educated teachers are more inclined to continuously improve their professional competence throughout their career, thereby enhancing their commitment to the school and the education cause (Helvacı & Kiliçoğlu, 2018). Nevertheless, research indicates that teachers with higher qualifications may also experience reduced professional commitment due to insufficient career development opportunities. Thus, the following research hypotheses are proposed:

H3a: There are significant differences in teacher professional commitment among primary school teachers in Shandong Province, China, based on gender.

H3b: There are significant differences in teacher professional commitment among primary school teachers in Shandong Province, China, based on educational attainment.

H3c: There are significant differences in teacher professional commitment among primary school teachers in Shandong Province, China, based on teaching experience.

2.5. The Relationship Between Perceived School Organizational Climate and Work performance

A positive school climate—characterized by supportive leadership, positive colleague relationships, and effective student behavior management—is closely linked to teachers' job satisfaction, teaching efficacy, and lower stress levels. These factors collectively contribute to significantly enhanced teacher work performance (Collie, 2020). Research indicates that certain mediating factors influence the relationship between teachers' perceptions of school organizational climate and their work performance. A study by Douglas (2010) involving 67 elementary schools in Alabama found that when teachers perceive the school climate as supportive, positive, and encouraging collaboration, they are more likely to exhibit a high level of occupational commitment, including loyalty to the school's mission, dedication to their work, and willingness for continuous development, leading to greater engagement and improved work performance. Positive interactions and supportive relationships between principals and teachers significantly enhance teachers' perceptions of school climate, thereby increasing job satisfaction and teaching quality (Price, 2012). Extensive research on school climate indicates that teachers' positive perceptions of school climate—such as safety, support, and participation—correlate with higher teacher performance and student academic achievement (Thapa et al., 2013). School leadership styles (such as transformational leadership and supportive leadership) significantly influence teachers' perceptions of school climate, which in turn affects their work engagement and teaching performance (Kelley, Thornton & Daugherty, 2005). Teachers' sense of teaching efficacy (i.e., their confidence in their ability to influence student learning) is significantly correlated with the organizational health of the school (e.g., a supportive and innovative environment), and these factors collectively promote teacher work performance (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). Adeogun and Olisaemeka (2011) investigated ten secondary schools in Nigeria as research sites, and the findings revealed a significant correlation between school climate and teacher work efficiency. Patterson et al. (2005) investigated 6,869 employees from 55 manufacturing firms in the United Kingdom and found that organisational climate exerts a significant

effect on work performance. Based on the above prior research analysis, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H4: Perceived school organizational climate significantly positively influences work performance among elementary school teachers in Shandong Province, China.

2.6. The Relationship Between Organizational Commitment, Work Performance, and Organizational Climate

Stronger commitment correlates with higher work engagement and certain forms of citizenship behavior, leading to improved performance, greater satisfaction, reduced stress, and lower rates of absenteeism and work-family conflict (Bogler & Somech, 2004; Meyer et al., 2019). Rosenholtz (1987) also found in studies on educational reform strategies that enhancing professional commitment leads to greater work effort. Furthermore, professional commitment serves as a reason for individuals to maintain their current occupation. As a link between the individual and career development, teachers' occupational commitment profoundly influences processes and outcomes within the career, and this psychological need can also facilitate the realization of teaching reflection (Meyer et al., 2019). Specifically, driven by professional commitment, teachers actively reflect on shortcomings in their educational practices and proactively seek improvement strategies, ultimately advancing their professional growth (Delima, 2015). Teacher commitment is closely linked to teaching performance and turnover rates (Somech & Bogler, 2002; Ware & Kitsantas, 2011). Numerous studies indicate that teacher commitment is a strong predictor of teacher professionalism, work performance, and education quality (Dee, Henkin & Singleton, 2006; Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Hulpia, Devos & Van Keer, 2009; Tsui & Cheng, 1999). Based on the analysis of previous research above, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H5: Occupational commitment has a significant positive impact on the work performance of primary school teachers in Shandong Province, China.

Studies examining the unique relationship between professional commitment and organizational commitment versus decision participation and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) reveal that a positive organizational climate enhances teachers' professional commitment, while high levels of professional commitment significantly boost teachers' work performance. Organizational climate influences teachers' work performance through the mediating variable of professional commitment (Somech & Bogler, 2002). Teachers' perceived organizational support and a positive school climate can increase their occupational commitment, and this enhanced commitment further promotes their work performance. The influence of organizational climate on work performance is partially realized through occupational commitment (Olivier & Venter, 2003). Principals' backgrounds and school management processes influence teachers' perceptions of school climate, which subsequently affect their levels of professional commitment. Professional commitment mediates the relationship between school climate and teacher work performance (Shen et al., 2012). Teachers' personal efficacy and collective efficacy are closely related to their occupational commitment, which significantly influences their work performance. The impact of school climate on teacher efficacy and occupational commitment is ultimately reflected in teacher work performance

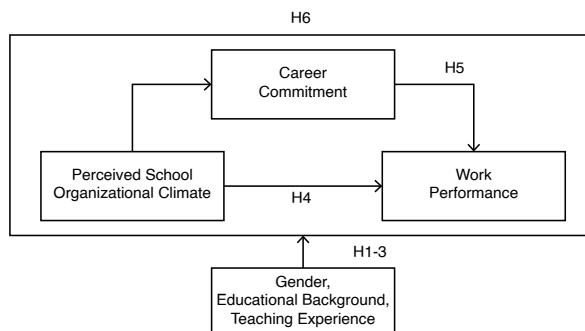
(Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). The organizational health of a school (including school climate) significantly affects teachers' occupational commitment, and high levels of occupational commitment positively impact teaching performance. Occupational commitment plays a key mediating role between organizational health and work performance. Based on the analysis of the above prior research, this study proposes the following hypothesis: H6: Occupational commitment among primary school teachers in Shandong Province, China mediates the relationship between teachers' perceptions of school organizational climate and their work performance.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Framework

This study takes gender, educational background, and teaching experience as the background variables, utilizing the SCT model as its theoretical framework of this research to investigate the impact of teachers' perception of the school organizational atmosphere on work performance, and to explore the mediating role of career commitment. The framework model diagram of this study is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Research Framework Model Diagram.



3.2. Research Subjects

This study collected data through questionnaire surveys and adopted the method of convenient sampling. 380 primary and secondary school teachers from 12 public primary schools in Shandong Province were selected as the research subjects for the questionnaire survey. As China's most populous province with abundant educational resources and numerous elementary schools, Shandong's diverse educational system provides extensive sampling opportunities. The large number of teachers in the primary school teacher group in Shandong Province and their high level of participation in activities, combined with the researcher's convenient research environment and interpersonal relationships in Shandong Province, made it easy to select public primary schools within the province as the research subjects. These 12 schools are primarily located in Weifang, Zibo, and Jining cities within Shandong Province. All are public regular primary schools, and the sampled teachers are currently employed at these institutions. Public school teachers are more directly influenced by national and local

education policies, and the policy implementation is relatively unified. The research results can better reflect the effect of policy implementation (Darling-Hammond, 2016). In addition, public schools have higher transparency compared to private schools, and data acquisition is relatively easier (Xu, Song & Liu, 2018).

3.3. Implementation Method

This research utilized the questionnaire survey method to collect data. In the target schools, teachers filled out the online questionnaire voluntarily to ensure the accuracy and representativeness of the data. This research strictly followed the regulations and requirements stipulated in the National Policy and Guidelines for Human Research 2015 proposed by the National Research Council of Thailand (2015), adhering to the principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. The online questionnaire was conducted through the Qiankuai platform and was forwarded via WeChat and DingTalk apps. Participants could complete the electronic questionnaire by scanning the QR code or clicking the link. The entire process took approximately 5 minutes. To ensure the accuracy of the formal questionnaire, the research team explained the research purpose in detail to the participants before distribution, emphasizing the importance of the questionnaire and specifically stating the confidentiality of the survey results. The study was conducted from April to May 2025, yielding 380 completed formal questionnaires. Invalid questionnaires with identical options and answering time less than 120 seconds were deleted. A total of 368 valid questionnaires were obtained. During this period, no significant educational policy changes or post-pandemic reforms occurred in Shandong Province. Therefore, external contextual factors had minimal influence on teachers' perceptions, and the data remained highly stable.

3.4. Measurement Tools

3.4.1. Perception of School Organizational Atmosphere Scale

This study adopted the School Level Environment Questionnaire (SLEQ) developed by Johnson and Stevens (2001), which was designed for primary school teachers. The study used a back-translation process for cultural adaptation. Bilingual researchers translated and back-translated the scale, and any inconsistencies were revised to ensure semantic accuracy and cultural relevance. The questionnaire assesses organizational climate across four dimensions: teacher collaboration, teacher-student relationships, decision-making participation, and school resources, comprising 21 items. The scale used a 5-point scoring system, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with 5 reverse questions for reverse scoring. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of this scale was .916. The CR values for the four dimensions were .945, .908, .957, and .931 respectively, and the AVE values were .742, .713, .761, and .772.

3.4.2. Work Performance Scale

This study utilized the teacher performance evaluation scale developed by Cai and Lin (2005), which divided the performance measurement of primary school teachers into two dimensions: professional ethics performance and task performance, totaling

14 items. The Likert 5-point method was used, with scores ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” as 1 to 5 respectively. The higher the teacher’s score, the higher their work performance. The Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of this scale was .889. The CR values for the two dimensions were .937 and .969 respectively, and the AVE values were .789 and .760.

3.4.3. Teacher Professional Commitment Scale

This study adopted the teacher professional commitment scale developed by Long and Li (2002), which included three dimensions: emotional commitment, continuance commitment, and professional commitment. It contained 16 items, including 6 questions for emotional commitment, 5 questions for continuance commitment, and 5 questions for professional commitment. The scoring method used was the Likert 5-point method, and all were positive scoring. The Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of this scale was .822. The CR values for the three dimensions were .937, .945, and .946 respectively, and the AVE values were .715, .775, and .777.

3.5 Data Analysis Methods

This study utilized SPSS and AMOS software to analyze the collected data, including descriptive analysis, independent sample t-test, one-way ANOVA, reliability testing, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modeling.

4. Research Results

4.1. Basic Data Analysis

A total of 368 valid formal questionnaires were collected, with background variables including gender, educational background, and years of teaching experience. Firstly, the sample data was sorted and analyzed. The distribution of demographic variables of the research sample is shown in Table 1. In terms of gender, there were 118 male teachers and 250 female teachers. In terms of educational background, teachers with a bachelor’s degree constituted the largest group (n=328), while 40 teachers held a master’s degree or higher. In terms of teaching experience, the number of teachers with 21 years or more of experience was the highest, at 205, followed by 70 teachers with 11-20 years of experience, 66 teachers with 4-10 years of experience, and the lowest number was 27 teachers with 3 years or less of experience.

Table 1: Basic Characteristics of Research Participants (N=368).

Variable Category	Variable Category	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	118	32.0%
	Female	250	68.0%
Teaching Experience	3 years or less	27	7.3%
	4-10 years	66	17.9%
	11-20 years	70	19.0%
	21 years or more	205	55.7%
Education Level	Bachelor’s degree	328	89.1%
	Master’s degree or above	40	10.9%

4.2. Difference Analysis

4.2.1. Differences in Variables between Different Gender Groups

There were significant differences in the perception of the school organizational atmosphere between male and female primary school teachers ($t = 5.13, p < .001$). Male primary school teachers had significantly higher scores in the perception of the school organizational atmosphere than female primary school teachers; there were no significant differences in work performance ($t = 1.63, p > .050$); and there were no significant differences in professional commitment ($t = 1.81, p > .050$). See Table 2.

Table 2: Difference Analysis Table for Different Gender Groups.

Variable	Male 1 (N=118)		Female 2 (N=250)		t	Difference Comparison
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation		
Perception of School Organizational Atmosphere	4.06	.574	3.75	.532	5.13***	1>2
Work Performance	4.39	.391	4.30	.451	1.63	-
Professional Commitment	3.56	.374	3.48	.392	1.81	-

Note: *** $p < .001$.

4.2.2. Analysis of Differences in Variables among Teachers of Different Teaching Experience

There were significant differences in the perception of school organizational atmosphere among primary school teachers of different teaching experience ($F = 44.60, p < .001$). There were significant differences in work performance among primary school teachers of different teaching experience ($F = 34.02, p < .001$). There were significant differences in professional commitment among primary school teachers of different teaching experience ($F = 25.9, p < .001$). Post-hoc comparison results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Analysis of Differences among Different Teaching Experience Groups.

Variable	Group 1 (N=27)		Group 2 (N=66)		Group 3 (N=70)		Group 4 (N=205)		F	Post-hoc Comparison
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Perception of school organizational atmosphere	3.20	.501	3.8	.483	3.49	.451	4.07	.492	44.60***	4>2 2>3 3>1
Work performance	4.04	.453	4.17	.382	4.07	.383	4.50	.372	34.02***	4>2 2>3 3>1
Professional commitment	3.08	.374	3.42	.344	3.39	.392	3.63	.334	25.9***	4>2 2>3 3>1

Note 1: *** $p < .001$.
 Note 2: 1 group = 3 years or less of teaching experience, 2 group = 4-10 years of teaching experience, 3 group = 11-20 years of teaching experience, 4 group = 21 years or more of teaching experience.

4.2.3. Analysis of Differences in Each Variable by Different Education Levels

There were significant differences in the perception of the school's organizational

atmosphere among teachers with different educational backgrounds ($t = 15.01, p < .001$), with teachers with a master's degree or above scoring significantly higher than those with a bachelor's degree. There were also significant differences in work performance ($t = 12.71, p < .001$), with teachers with a master's degree or above scoring significantly higher than those with a bachelor's degree. There were significant differences in professional commitment ($t = 6.67, p < .001$), with teachers with a master's degree or above scoring significantly higher than those with a bachelor's degree. See Table 4.

Table 4: Analysis of Differences by Different Education Levels.

Variable	Group 1 (N=328)		Group 2 (N=40)		t	Difference Comparison
	M	SD	M	SD		
Perception of school organizational atmosphere	3.761	.512	4.59	.305	15.012***	2>1
Work performance	4.273	.416	4.80	.221	12.713***	2>1
Professional commitment	3.476	.385	3.78	.262	6.674***	2>1

Note 1: *** $p < .001$.
 Note 2: 1 group = bachelor's degree, 2 group = master's degree or above.

4.3. Structural Equation Model

4.3.1. Structural Equation Model and Fit

The test results of the fit indicators for the model show that the overall fit of the model is good. $\chi^2/df = 1.454$, which is less than the reference value of 5 (Hu & Bentler, 1999); GFI = .894, which is within the acceptable range, AGFI = .901, which is greater than the reference value of .900 (Hu & Bentler, 1999); SRMR = .049, RMSEA = .043, which is less than the reference value of .080 (Hu & Bentler, 1999); Incremental Fit: NFI = .873, which is within the acceptable range, RFI = .933, IFI = .945, CFI = .954, all of which are greater than the reference value of .900 (Hu & Bentler, 1999); Reduced Fit: PNFI = .503, PGFI = .571, both of which are greater than the reference value of .500 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). When the model meets most of the above indicators, it indicates that the fit degree of the model meets the requirements (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The fitting indicators of this study are in line with the reference values, which shows that the model fit is very good. See Table 5.

Table 5: Model Fit Indices.

Fit Index	Value	Reference Criterion
χ^2/df	1.454	< 5
GFI	0.894	≥ 0.80
AGFI	0.901	≥ 0.90
SRMR	0.049	< 0.08
RMSEA	0.043	< 0.08
NFI	0.873	≥ 0.80
RFI	0.933	≥ 0.90
IFI	0.945	≥ 0.90
CFI	0.954	≥ 0.90
PNFI	0.503	≥ 0.50
PGFI	0.571	≥ 0.50

4.3.2. Path Analysis

The estimated coefficient for perceived school organizational climate on work performance was .256, with a standard error of .087, critical ratio (C.R.) of 2.510, and p-value of .012 ($p < .050$). This indicates a significant positive effect of perceived school organizational climate on work performance. The estimated coefficient for perceived school organizational climate on vocational commitment was .192, with a standard error of .068, critical ratio (C.R.) of 2.563, and p-value of .010 ($p < .050$). This indicates a significant positive effect of perceived school organizational climate on vocational commitment. The estimated coefficient for professional commitment on work performance is .302, with a standard error of .084, a critical ratio (C.R.) of 4.656, and a significant p-value. The standardized estimate is .302, indicating that professional commitment has a significant positive effect on work performance. See Table 6.

Table 6: Path Analysis Results.

Path		β	S.E.	C.R.
Perceived School Organizational Atmosphere	→ Work performance	.256**	.087	2.510
Perceived School Organizational Atmosphere	→ Career Commitment	.192**	.068	2.563
Career Commitment	→ Work performance	.302***	.084	4.656

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$.

4.4. Analysis of Mediating Effect

This study employed the Bootstrap method, conducting 5,000 sampling of the data to construct a 95% confidence interval. If the indirect effect falls within the 95% confidence interval and is significant, it indicates the presence of a mediating effect; if the direct effect is significant, it suggests a partial mediating effect, and if it includes 0, it represents a complete mediating effect (Hayes, 2017). Specific test results are as follows: The indirect effect of Perceived School Organizational Climate → Professional Commitment → Work performance was .068, with a 95% confidence interval [.024, .134], $p = .004$ ($p < .010$). Since the upper and lower bounds of the confidence interval did not include zero, professional commitment significantly mediated the effect of perceived school organizational climate on work performance. See Table 7.

Table 7: Mediating Effect Test Table.

Path	Effect	Effect Value	Confidence Interval (95%)		p
Perceived School Organizational Atmosphere → Professional Commitment → Work performance	Indirect Effect	.068	.024	.134	.004
	Direct Effect	.421	.277	.572	.000
	Total Effect	.489	.347	.640	.000

5. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal significant gender differences in how elementary school teachers in Shandong Province, China perceive their school's organizational climate, supporting research hypothesis H1a. Male teachers may tend to emphasize competition and results-oriented approaches more, while female teachers may pay greater attention to collaboration and a supportive environment (Eagly & Carli, 2003).

Furthermore, female teachers may face greater emotional labor and psychological burdens within schools, thereby influencing their perceptions of organizational climate (Ahmad, Khan & Rehman, 2015). In China, female teachers make up most of the primary school workforce, so male teachers are often viewed as a “scarce resource.” As a result, they receive more attention in work allocation and promotion opportunities, which enhances their positive perception of the organisational climate.

The findings indicate no significant gender differences in work performance among primary school teachers in Shandong Province, China, indicating that research hypothesis H1b is not supported. This aligns with conclusions from related studies. For instance, Holmlund and Sund (2008) noted that the influence of gender roles is diminishing in education, with teacher performance increasingly dependent on individual professional competence and career development rather than gender itself. Additionally, the gender ratio among primary school teachers is relatively unbalanced, with the proportion of female teachers significantly higher than that of male teachers. This imbalance in the sample might dilute the observed effect of gender on work performance (Hallinger & Heck, 1998).

The findings reveal no significant gender differences in professional commitment among primary school teachers in Shandong Province, China, indicating that research hypothesis H1c is not supported. With the implementation of policies such as the Professional Standards for Primary and Secondary School Teachers and the Reform Guidelines for Building a High-Quality Teaching Workforce in the New Era, teacher development has been more explicitly oriented towards professional competence and career growth, thereby further diminishing the influence of gender differences on vocational commitment. Moreover, teachers’ occupational commitment is likely influenced more by individual career goals and school culture than by traditional gender role expectations (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

The findings reveal significant differences in the perception of school organizational climate among primary school teachers in Shandong Province, China, based on their educational background, supporting research hypothesis H2a. Research shows that teachers with higher educational qualifications may have accumulated more experience and resources in their career development, leading to a more positive perception of the school's organizational climate (Salwa, Kristiawan & Lian, 2019).

The findings also reveal significant differences in work performance among primary school teachers in Shandong Province, China, based on educational attainment, supporting research hypothesis H2b. Research indicates a positive correlation between teachers’ educational level and their work performance, with higher-educated teachers typically demonstrating superior outcomes in teaching effectiveness, classroom management, and student interaction (Jalalkamali et al., 2016). Teachers with higher education not only possess more solid professional knowledge but are also able to employ more advanced teaching methods and strategies, thereby enhancing their overall work performance (Rhoades et al., 2001).

The findings reveal significant differences in career commitment among primary school teachers in Shandong Province, China, based on educational attainment, suggesting that research hypothesis H2c is supported. Teachers with higher educational qualifications often have access to more career development opportunities and support, facilitating the achievement of personal goals throughout their careers and thereby strengthening their career commitment (Helvacı & Kiliçoglu, 2018).

The findings of this study show that there are significant differences in the perception of the school organizational climate among primary school teachers in Shandong Province, China, based on their teaching experience, suggesting that research hypothesis H3a is supported. Teachers with longer tenure typically establish more robust interpersonal networks within the school, enabling them to access greater information and support when perceiving the school climate (Mollazehi, 2016).

The findings reveal significant differences in work performance among primary school teachers in Shandong Province, China, based on their years of teaching experience, confirming research hypothesis H3b. Experienced teachers not only possess more solid professional knowledge but also handle various classroom challenges more effectively, thereby enhancing their overall work performance (Marzano, 2003).

The findings reveal significant differences in professional commitment among primary school teachers in Shandong Province, China, based on years of teaching experience, confirming research hypothesis H3c. Teachers with longer teaching experience have typically undergone multiple educational reforms and changes in the school environment. The rich experience accumulated in adapting to and addressing these changes. This deepens their understanding of educational work (Grillo & Kier, 2021), thereby enhancing professional commitment. Furthermore, in an educational context shaped by Confucian cultural norms, senior teachers are often influenced by values such as dedication, responsibility, and respect for hierarchy, which reinforces the increase in their vocational commitment as their years of service expand.

The findings confirm that Shandong Province primary school teachers' perceptions of school organizational climate exert a significant positive influence on work performance, thus validating H4. A positive organizational climate can enhance teachers' sense of self-efficacy and belonging, making them feel more valued in their work (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). A positive school atmosphere is typically accompanied by effective communication and feedback mechanisms. This enables teachers to gain a clearer understanding of school goals and expectations, allowing them to better adjust their teaching strategies (Price, 2012), consequently improving work performance.

The findings of this study indicate that the professional commitment of primary school teachers in Shandong Province, China, has a significant positive impact on their work performance, thus confirming H5. Teachers' investment in professional commitment is usually closely related to their passion and sense of responsibility for the education cause, which promotes positive performance in teaching (Meyer et al., 2019). Teachers with higher professional commitment are more willing to invest time and effort in professional development and teaching innovation, further enhancing their work performance (Ware & Kitsantas, 2011).

The findings indicate that the professional commitment of primary school teachers in Shandong Province, China, mediates the relationship between teachers' perceptions of school organizational climate and work performance, thus supporting H6. A positive school atmosphere can enhance teachers' sense of belonging and self-efficacy, thereby increasing their professional commitment (Kurniawan, Harijanto & Wulandari, 2024). When teachers feel supported and trusted, they are more likely to develop an identification with the education cause, and thus show higher levels of engagement and enthusiasm in their work (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Furthermore, teachers with

higher professional commitment are often more willing to invest time and effort in teaching, which further promotes improvements in their work performance.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the influence of demographic characteristics on teachers' perceived school organisational climate, work performance and occupational commitment, as well as the internal mechanisms linking these variables. The results showed that gender differences were only reflected in the perception of school organisational climate, while educational background and teaching experience exerted significant effects on all three variables. These findings suggest that differences in knowledge structure and professional experience shape teachers' perceptions of their work environment, their behavioural output and their long-term commitment to the profession.

This study contributes to the literature by integrating organisational climate, occupational commitment and work performance into a unified analytical framework, thereby enriching the theoretical understanding of how contextual perceptions translate into teachers' behavioural outcomes. The confirmation of the mediating role of occupational commitment provides new empirical support for its importance in educational settings and offers an explanatory pathway for improving teachers' performance through organisational conditions. Practically, the findings underscore the necessity for school leaders to cultivate a supportive and cohesive organisational climate, as doing so not only enhances teachers' immediate work engagement but also fosters a stable sense of professional commitment. These insights offer valuable implications for educational administrators seeking to improve teacher effectiveness and sustain long-term workforce development.

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. First, the use of convenience sampling limits the representativeness of the sample. The schools willing to participate may share similar organisational conditions or geographical proximity, and teachers from remote rural areas were under-represented, potentially introducing regional bias. Future studies should adopt stratified or random sampling methods to ensure broader coverage across diverse school contexts. Second, the exclusive reliance on self-reported questionnaires introduces methodological constraints, as common-method bias and self-perception distortions may affect the results. Future research can incorporate multi-source data—such as administrative records, classroom observations or interviews—to enhance validity. Longitudinal designs may also be employed to capture the dynamic processes through which organisational climate and professional commitment influence performance over time.

7. Research Recommendations

In the practice of primary education, the collaborative efforts of teachers and administrators are crucial for enhancing work performance. First, at the teacher level, teachers should focus on strengthening their professional commitment and establishing a long-term and stable professional development path. Research shows that professional commitment has a significant positive effect on work performance, and the impact varies among different educational qualifications and teaching experience groups. For teachers with lower educational qualifications or shorter tenure, enhancing professional identity and reducing burnout can be achieved by

clarifying career goals, pursuing further education, and actively participating in teaching skills training to reduce job burnout; while senior teachers can transform their rich experience into professional identity and responsibility by participating in mentorship programs and curriculum development, thereby maintaining a stable level of professional commitment. Teachers should also engage in regular professional reflection, developing personalized growth plans aligned with their developmental stage to ensure sustained career advancement and professional growth. Additionally, teachers should actively participate in the construction of the school's organizational atmosphere, serving as both perceivers and builders of the atmosphere.

At the administrative level, first, attention should be paid to the differences within the teacher group and the formulation of targeted management strategies. Research indicates that the gender, educational qualifications, and teaching experience of teachers have a significant impact on their perception of the organizational atmosphere and professional commitment. Administrators should provide educational subsidies and professional development opportunities for teachers with lower academic qualifications, while establishing research and innovation platforms for those with advanced degrees. Set up mentorship systems for new teachers to help them quickly adapt to the school environment. And provide leadership positions or development opportunities for senior teachers to prevent a decline in professional commitment as teaching experience increases. Secondly, administrators should focus on optimizing the school's organizational atmosphere, which plays a key role in enhancing teacher performance. Adopting democratic leadership styles, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, and improving teaching resource allocation can foster a positive atmosphere. Simultaneously, administrators should promptly understand teachers' perception of the atmosphere through questionnaires or interviews and continuously adjust management measures based on feedback to ensure the continuous positive effect of the organizational atmosphere. Finally, schools should establish a comprehensive teacher development support system to enhance teachers' professional commitment. This includes creating fair and transparent promotion mechanisms, improving welfare systems, and recognizing and promoting outstanding teachers.

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