Effect of Followership Style on Organizational Commitment: A Partial LeastSquares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) Approach

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	According to Kelley (1992), followers play a significant role in approximately 80% of an organization's overall performance. Followers' actions and attitudes are vital to execution and goal achievement. Nevertheless, the concept of followership has received limited attention in academic research. Therefore, this research aims to provide a valuable contribution to the academic field by conducting an empirical investigation on followership style and organizational commitment in Sarawak, Malaysia. The purpose of this research is to identify prevalent teachers' followership styles in Sarawak. The study also analyse the relationship between followership dimensios and teachers' organizational commitment. To conduct this study, a total of 899 primary school teachers were involved as respondents. To measure the followership style, The Revised of Kelly Followership Questionnaire (KFQ-R) which has been revised by Kevin et al. (2019) was found to be the most suitable for the purpose of the study. While the Three Component Model Employee Commitment Survey (TCM-ECS) questionnaire developed by Meyer and Allen (2004) was used tomeasure teachers' organizational commitment. This study uses quantitative methods and the data analysed descriptively (mean, standard deviation) by using IBM Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences 2.9 (SPSS). Smart Partial least squares-structural equation modelling (Smart PLS SEM v.4.0.9.3) was used to test the hypotheses. The findings of this study show that the most common followership style among teachers is exemplary followership style. Also, the results indicated a significant positive correlation between follower's active engagement dimension (beta value 0.417) and follower's critical thinking dimension (beta value 0.112) with organizational commitment. Overall, this study produces a model to show the contribution of followership style to organizational commitment. The study's findings have practical implications for leadership practices and tactics targeted at improving leader-follower interactions and emphasizes the need of studying followership in different circumstances to recognize their crucial role in attaining organizational commitment. While there are limitations to consider, such as the need for further research to explore cross-cultural variations and contextual factors, the insights gained from this study offer practical implications for bridging the gap between research and practice in education, ultimately contributing to the continuous improvement of teaching and learning experiences.

Keywords: Followership Style, Organizational Commitment, Partial Least Squares-StructuralEquation Modelling (PLS-SEM). |

I. INTRODUCTION

The role of followership style in educational institutions is critical for fostering a positive organizational culture and enhancing employee commitment. Research has shown that transformational leadership, a style closely related to followership, has a generally positive impact on organizational commitment in various industries, including the education sector (Mesu et al., 2015). Moreover, the conceptualization of followership has been linked to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational effectiveness (Crossman et al., 2011). Therefore, understanding followership styles and their influence on organizational commitment is essential for creating a conducive work environment within educational institutions.

Followership, as a concept, has gained recognition for its importance in organizational (Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Finlayson, 2021; Blanchard et al., 2009 ; Hayes et al., 2015). However, there is a lack of comprehensive research specifically investigating how different followership styles, such as exemplary followership or courageous followership, may affect employees' commitment to the organization. While leadership has been extensively studied, followership has often been overlooked, leading to a limited understanding of its influence on organizational commitment. The existing literature has highlighted the interconnectedness of followership and leadership, emphasizing the need to delve deeper into the role of followership in shaping organizational dynamics. Thus, this paper aims to identify the effect of followership style on organizational commitment, drawing on a range of studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of this relationship.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Frameworks

The relationship between followership style and organizational commitment can be effectively understood through the lens of the Social Exchange Theory (SET). SET, as highlighted by Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005) is a significant paradigm in organizational behavior that emphasizes the give-and-take dynamic in social relationships. When applied to followership styles, SET suggests that the interactions between leaders and followers are based on mutual exchanges of resources, support, and trust. The Social Exchange Theory suggests that the relationship quality between leader and followers can influence the followers' commitment to an organization (Blau Peter M., 1964).

Specifically, the theory posits that employees are motivated to increase beneficial exchanges that enhance their work experience, thereby fostering a deeper commitment to the organization. In the context of followership styles, proactive followers who typically engage more with their roles and exhibit higher levels of initiative are likely to perceive a higher level of beneficial exchanges, such as greater recognition and career advancement opportunities. This perception leads to increased organizational commitment as the rewards of their engagement outweigh the potential costs. Conversely, passive followers may perceive fewer benefits due to their limited engagement, which can result in a lower sense of commitment to the organization. By framing the discussion within SET, this study aims to illuminate how different followership styles distinctly influence the social exchanges between employees and the organization, ultimately affecting their level of organizational commitment. This theoretical approach not only helps in understanding the underlying mechanics of organizational behavior but also guides the empirical investigation into how variations in followership styles impact organizational commitment.

Types of Followership Styles

Kelley (1992) identifies five primary styles of followership: exemplary, conformist, passive, alienated, and pragmatist. Kelly's model emphasizes the importance of critical thinking and active engagement as key dimensions that characterize how individuals follow, highlighting the diverse ways in which followers contribute to organizational dynamics. The literature identifies five types of followership styles, each encompassing a range of behaviors and attitudes. Exemplary followers exhibit independent critical thinking and active engagement, aligning their actions with organizational goals. Pragmatic followers strike a balance between critical thinking and engagement, adapting their approach based on the situation. Conformist followers tend to agree with the leader without questioning, while alienated followers may possess critical thinking skills but are disengaged. Passive followers rely heavily on the leader for direction and lack initiative. These distinct followership styles provide insights into how individuals contribute to organizational dynamics through their varying levels of engagement and critical thinking.

Dimensions of Organizational Commitment

The three-component model proposed by Meyer et al. (1991) aptly characterises the multifaceted nature of organisational commitment: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Affective commitment pertains to the employee's emotive attachment, continuance commitment concerns one's awareness of the repercussions of departing from the organisation, and normative commitment entails a perceived duty to

remain. Understanding these components is vital for analyzing how various followership styles impact overall commitment.

Empirical Studies on Followership Style

Empirical studies on followership styles have gained significant attention in recent years. Howell & Shamir (2005) explored the role of followers in the charismatic leadership process, emphasizing the relationships and consequences involved. This study sheds light on the dynamics between leaders and followers, highlighting the importance of followership styles in the overall leadership process. Additionally, Neal et al. (2016) presented a case for followership as a key element in leadership development within the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence. Their research underscores the significance of understanding followership styles to enhance leadership effectiveness and organizational performance.

Furthermore, research by (Bunin et al., 2022) delves into harnessing followership to empower graduate medical education trainees, emphasizing the different followership styles that can impact the development of medical professionals. This study provides insights into how followership styles can influence the training and empowerment of future healthcare leaders. Moreover, Strong & Williams (2014) examined the influence of followership styles on self-directed learning among undergraduate students in agricultural leadership courses. Their work highlights the importance of followership in educational settings and its impact on students' learning approaches. By synthesizing these studies, a comprehensive understanding of followership styles and their implications for various domains, including leadership development and education can be achieved.

Active Engagement, Critical Thinking and Organizational Commitment

Understanding how active engagement and critical thinking influence organizational commitment provides valuable insights into employee behavior and organizational effectiveness. This literature review synthesizes findings from various studies to elucidate these relationships.

The relationship between followership critical thinking and organizational commitment has been a subject of interest in recent literature. Several studies have explored the dimensions of followership and their impact on organizational commitment. For instance, Solinger et al. (2008) provided a critical conceptual analysis of organizational commitment, emphasizing the affective component as a genuine attitude towards the organization. Additionally, Javaid et al. (2023) highlighted the role of followers with critical thinking abilities in committing themselves to followership, enabling leaders to better understand their obligations. Furthermore, (Li et al., 2020)

found a correlation between followership dimensions such as active engagement and critical thinking with leadership, indicating their potential impact on organizational commitment.

Critical thinking in the workplace involves analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information to make informed decisions. Employees who engage in critical thinking are seen as more autonomous and likely to challenge conventional wisdom to improve organizational processes and outcomes. Finlayson (2021) highlights the importance of exemplary followership in organizations, emphasizing that followership dimensions such as critical thinking and active engagement are akin to the personality dimension of effective leaders. This suggests that followers who exhibit critical thinking skills and actively engage with their roles may contribute positively to organizational commitment.

Active engagement in the workplace is characterized by employees' physical, cognitive, and emotional involvement in their job roles. According to Schaufeli et al. (2002), engagement is a state of mind in the workplace that is pleasant, gratifying, and related to work. It is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption. Research consistently shows that higher employee engagement is linked to increased organizational commitment, particularly affective commitment (Harter et al., 2002). Engaged employees are more likely to develop a strong emotional bond with their organization, which motivates them to continue working and contributing to organizational goals.

Furthermore, Finlayson's (2021) study validated the premise that connections exist between the active engagement dimension of followership and critical thinking with work performance, indicating a potential link to organisational commitment. Additionally, Andersen, (2019) characterized followership with critical thinking, emphasizing its role in the role of followers. Furthermore, Crossman & Crossman (2011) indicated that followership styles depend on individuals' capacity for critical thinking, which can influence their level of engagement and commitment.

Empirical studies have investigated the combined effect of active engagement and critical thinking on organizational commitment. For instance, a study by Robertson & Barling (2013) found that employees who scored high on measures of engagement and critical thinking displayed higher levels of affective commitment and lower turnover intentions. These findings support the hypothesis that engagement and critical thinking reinforce each other to enhance organizational commitment. The interplay between active

engagement and critical thinking contributes to a theoretical framework where both constructs act synergistically to enhance organizational commitment. According to Kahn (1990), theory of psychological conditions, engagement thrives in environments where employees are encouraged to think critically and question norms, which in turn leads to a more profound attachment to the organization.

The relationship between active engagement, critical thinking, and organizational commitment is complex yet profoundly significant. Organizations that foster both high engagement and critical thinking are likely to see enhanced organizational commitment, resulting in higher productivity, lower turnover, and better overall performance.

The synthesis of literature indicates a strong connection between active engagement and the affective aspect of organizational commitment (Bindl & Parker, 2010). Critical thinking has been correlated with increased engagement levels and a deeper affective commitment (Tabor et al., 2017). Engaged employees with critical thinking skills tend to exhibit a stronger commitment due to feeling valued, leading to increased job satisfaction and loyalty towards the organization.
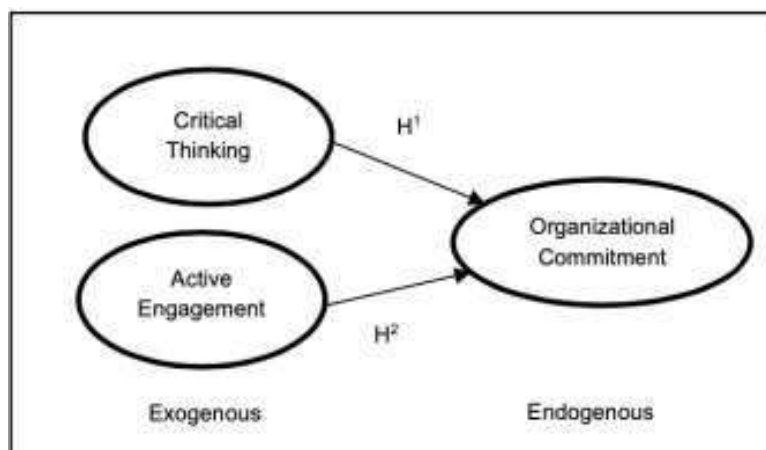
In conclusion, the literature suggests a significant relationship between followership critical thinking and organizational commitment. Followers with critical thinking abilities are more likely to commit themselves to followership, which in turn can impact organizational commitment. The dimensions of followership, particularly critical thinking and active engagement, have been found to correlate with leadership and job performance, indicating their potential influence on organizational commitment. Understanding the followership and its influence on organizational dynamics is essential for effective leadership and management in the education sector. Thus, it has been proposed that:

H^1: Follower's critical thinking is correlated with organizational commitment.
H^2: Follower's active engagement is correlated with organizational commitment.

Conceptual Framework

The following is the study conceptual framework summarized in Figure 1. This study hypothesizes organizational commitment influenced by critical thinking and active engagement.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

This paper examines the relationship between followership style and organizational commitment of primary school teachers in Sarawak. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the followership styles of teachers in Sarawak primary school?
2. Is there a significant relationship between critical thinking and organizational commitment of primary school teachers in Sarawak?
3. Is there a significant relationship between active engagement and organizational commitment of primary school teachers in Sarawak?

Research Design

This study used the survey approach through quantitative research. Creswell (2012) states that this design has the advantages of allowing for the simultaneous collection of more data, being inexpensive, simple to implement, and highly appropriate for explaining how one variable affects other variables. The questionnaire instrument was revealed through the Google Form application.

Population and Sample
The study population comprises teachers employed in 1266 elementary schools under the supervision of the Sarawak State Education Department (JPNS). There are 24 353 teachers in the population (KPM, 2023). Based on the table of (Krejcie, 1970) a total of 379 samples were selected from a total population of 24 353 with a confidence level of 95%. The total of respondents is 899. Among the respondents, 68.9% were female, while 31.1 were male. The respondents were with an average age of 41.07 (SD=9.71). Regarding professional experience, the years of teaching experience among the respondents vary significantly, from 1 to 36 years, with an average of 15.8 years (SD= 10.29). This wide variance highlights a mix of relatively new and highly experienced teachers.

Sampling Techniques
The cluster sampling technique was found to be the best appropriate for usage in this study. According to this method, the sampling frame is a complete list of clusters rather than a complete list of individual instances in the population (Saunders et al., 2019). For the purpose of this study, the complete list of clusters refers to the 30 District Education Offices (PPD) in Sarawak. After the schools were randomly selected, the study sample obtained was 899 people and 60 schools involved.

The Instruments
To measure the followership style, The Revised of Kelly Followership Questionnaire (KFQ-R) which has been revised by Kevin et al. (2019) was found to be the most suitable for the purpose of the study. While the Three Component Model Employee Commitment Survey (TCM-ECS) questionnaire developed by Meyer & Allen (2004) was used to measure teachers' organizational commitment. The internal consistency reliability of the scale was (Cronbach alpha = 0.931 for KFQ-R) and (Cronbach alpha = 0.944 for TCM-ECS).

Data Collection Procedures
Questionnaire data collection is carried out online using the Google Form application. Before the study was carried out, an application for permission to conduct the study from the Ethics Committee (Human Research Ethics (Non-Medical) Committee), UNIMAS, the Educational Policy Planning and Research Division (EPRD), the Sarawak State Education Department (JPNS), the District Education Office (PDD) and school administrators was made. After getting the school administrator's approval and consent, the Google Forms link was sent to the administrator via email and the WhatsApp application.

Data Analysis Technique
Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29 and Smart Partial Least Squares (SmartPLS) version 4.0 software were used to analyze the data. Data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially. Descriptive statistics mean and standard deviation have been used to determine the teachers' followership style in Sarawak. To answer the second and third research question, the data was analyzed using SmartPLS software version 4.0. PLS-SEM is a statistical method that examines the direct and indirect connections between variables and other factors (Hair et al., 2022). The testing of the structural model was conducted according to the recommendations published by Hair et al. (2022). The structural model contains an arrow (directed point) which means the relationship between one construct and another construct (hypothesized relationship) containing beta (β) values for hypothesis testing and R^2 (R square) values. In this study, the R^2 value refers to Cohen et al. (2018) to discuss the effect of the exogenous and endogenous.

V. RESULT

Followership Style
In the study on followership styles among teachers in Sarawak primary schools, the findings revealed the prevalence of different followership styles within the teacher population. The most observed followership style was the exemplary style, with 92.5% of teachers exhibiting this approach. This style is characterized by individuals who are highly committed, proactive, and engaged in their roles within the organization. Additionally, the study identified other followership styles among teachers, including the pragmatist, alienated, conformist, and passive styles. The pragmatist and alienated styles were each observed in 3.0% of teachers, while the conformist style was present in 1.4% of teachers. Notably, the passive style was not reported among the teachers surveyed, indicating a lack of disengagement and apathy within the sample.

These findings shed light on the diverse followership styles present among teachers in Sarawak primary schools, with the majority demonstrating an exemplary approach characterized by high levels of commitment and engagement. Understanding these followership styles can help educational institutions tailor leadership and development initiatives to support and leverage the strengths of different types of followers. By recognizing and appreciating the various followership styles, organizations can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that fosters collaboration, innovation, and organizational commitment among teachers. Table 1 presents data on the followership styles of all the participants. The teachers' followership styles were identified using frequency and percentage.

TABLE 1: FOLLOWERSHIP STYLES USED BY SARAWAK PRIMARY SCHOOLTEACHERS

Folllowership Style Commonly usestyles (N=899)	Common/frequency	%
Exemplary	832	92.5
Pragmatist	27	3.0
Alienated	27	3.0
Conformist	13	1.4
Passive	0	0
	899	100.00

Followership Dimension

Subsequently, the critical thinking and active engagement ratings for every participant in the study were calculated based on their answers to Kelley's (1992) followership questionnaire. The descriptive statistics pertaining to the critical thinking and active dimensions were presented in Table 2. On a scale of 1 to 65, critical thinking scores varied from a minimum of 31 to a maximum of 65. The mean score for critical thinking was 50.0, accompanied by a standard deviation of 6.4. The range of active engagement scores was between 27 and 60, with a maximum score of 65. The mean active participation was 48.2 and the standard deviation was 5.7..

TABLE 2: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR FOLLOWER DIMENSION SCORES

Dimension	Low	High	Range	Mean	Std. Deviation
Critical	31	65	34	50.0	6.4
Thinking Active	27	60	33	48.2	5.7

Engagement

Structural Equation Modelling

As survey research is typically not normally distributed (Chin et al., 2003), we utilised partial least squares (PLS) modelling with the SmartPLS 4.0.9.3 version as the statistical tool to investigate the measurement and structural model. PLS modelling does not require the assumption of normality..

To address the issue of Common Method Bias, we initially examined the data acquired from a single source. Following the recommendations of Kock & Lynn (2012) and Kock (2015), we conducted a thorough assessment of collinearity. In this approach, all variables are regressed against a shared variable. If the VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) is less than or equal to 3.3, it indicates that there is no bias arising from the single source data. The analysis resulted in a VIF value of less than 3.3, indicating that single source bias is not a significant concern with our data (Table 3).

TABLE 3: FULL COLLINEARITY TESTING

Variable	VIF
Active Engagement	2.786
Critical Thinking	2.567
Organizational Commitment	1.351

Measurement Model

We tested the model constructed in two steps, as suggested by Anderson and Gerbin (1988). First, we examined the measurement model to ensure that the instruments used were valid and reliable, following the standards of Hair et al. (2019) and Ramayah et al. (2018), and then we conducted the structural model to test the hypothesis produced.

We evaluated the loadings, the average variance extracted (AVE), and the composite reliability (CR) for the measurement model. The loading values must be less than 0.5, the AVE must be greater than 0.5, and the CR must be greater than 0.7. The AVEs and CRs are all greater than 0.5 and 0.7, respectively, as shown in Table 4. The assessment is conducted according to established principles; specifically, items with loading values ranging from 0.40 to 0.70 will be maintained, whereas those below 0.40 will be eliminated (Hair et al., 2014). The results for loading, CR and AVE are presented in Table 2 and the measurement model presented on Figure 1.

The discriminant validity was then evaluated in step 2 using the HTMT criterion proposed by Henseler et al. (2015) and revised by Franke & Sarstedt (2019).The minimum HTMT value required is 0.85, while the moderature criterion allows for values as low as 0.90. According to the data presented in Table 5, all HTMT values were below the more stringent threshold of ≤ 0.85. Consequently, it can be inferred that the participants comprehended the notion that each construct is unique. When both validity tests are considered together, they indicate that the measurement items possess both validity and reliability.

TABLE 4: MEASUREMENT MODEL

Construct	Item Code	Loading	Outer Weights	CR	AVE
Critical Thinking				0.902	0.527
	C1	0.731	0.135		
	C2	0.667	0.136		
	C3	0.781	0.138		
	C4	0.804	0.146		
	C5	0.637	0.119		
	C6	0.785	0.157		
	C7	0.791	0.148		
	C8	0.762	0.148		
	C9	0.728	0.127		
	C10	0.527	0.123		
Active Engagement				0.908	0.515
	C15	0.674	0.122		
	C16	0.745	0.122		
	C17	0.773	0.142		
	C18	0.775	0.136		
	C19	0.748	0.124		
	C20	0.719	0.124		
	C21	0.653	0.102		
	C22	0.681	0.12		
	C23	0.692	0.125		
	C24	0.737	0.138		
	C25	0.687	0.136		
	C10	0.527	0.123		
Organizational Commitment				0.95	0.502
	D1	0.727	0.081		
	D2	0.617	0.094		
	D3	0.751	0.139		
	D5	0.687	0.112		
	D6	0.776	0.12		
	D7	0.777	0.088		
	D8	0.731	0.067		
	D9	0.697	0.052		
	D10	0.644	0.056		
	D11	0.794	0.084		
	D12	0.523	0.058		
	D13	0.794	0.071		
	D14	0.732	0.062		
	D15	0.691	0.057		
	D16	0.733	0.087		
	D17	0.676	0.101		
	D18	0.643	0.075		

Note: Average variance extracted (AVE), Composite reliability (CR)
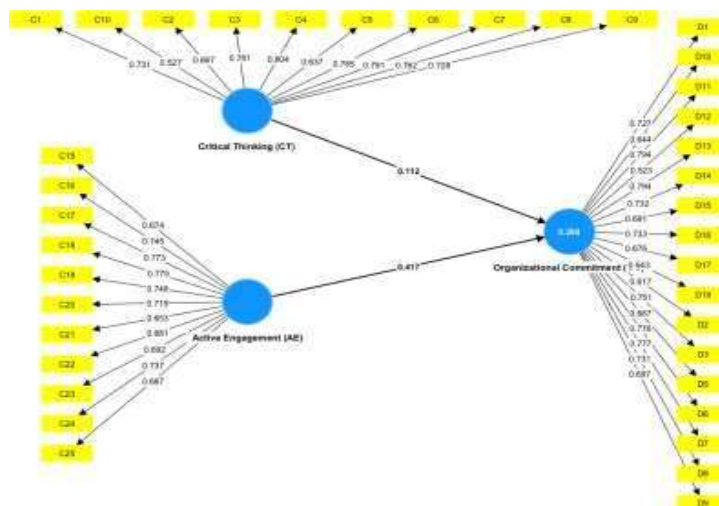
FIGURE 2. MEASUREMENT MODEL

TABLE 5. HTMT (heterotrait–monotrait ratio)

	Active Engagement	Critical Thinking	Organizational Commitment
Active Engagement			
Critical Thinking	0.863		
Organizational Commitment	0.504	0.44	

Structural Model

Hair et al. (2017) and Cain et al. (2017) recommended that we determine the multivariateskewness and kurtosis. The findings indicated that the collected data was contrary to multivariate normality, as indicated by Mardia's multivariate skewness (β = 0.4074636, p< 0.01) and kurtosis (β= 17.3544761, p< 0.01). In accordance with the recommendations by Hair et al. (2019), we utiliseda 5,000-sample re-sample bootstrapping method to calculate the path coefficients, standard errors, t-values, and p-values for the structural model (Ramayah et al. 2018). Furthermore, Hahn and Ang (2017) argue that p-values are inadequate as a criterion for assessing the significance of hypotheses.They suggest employing a combination of criteria, including confidence intervals, effect sizes, and p-values. The results of Mardia's multivariate kurtosis tests are presented in Table 6, while a summary of the criteria utilised to assess the derived hypotheses is provided in Table 7. On the otherhand, Figure 3 illustrates positive PLS-SEM relationships between variables.The findings of the hypotheses in the study on followership styles and organizational commitment among teachers in Sarawak primary schools provide valuable insights into the relationships between different variables. The hypotheses tested in the study were as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (H[1]): Follower's active engagement (AE) is correlated with organizational commitment (OC). The results indicated a significant positive correlation between follower's active engagement and organizational commitment. The beta value of 0.417 suggests a strong effect, witha mean of 0.42 and a t-value of 8.548, which was statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. This findingimplies that teachers who are actively engaged in their roles demonstrate higher levels of commitment to the organization.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Follower's critical thinking (CT) is correlated with organizational commitment (OC). The analysis revealed a positive correlation between follower's critical thinking and organizational commitment. The beta value of 0.112 indicates a smaller effect compared to active engagement, with a mean of 0.113 and a t-value of 2.112, which was statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. This suggests that critical thinking skills also play a role in influencing teachers' commitment to the organization.

TABLE 6: MARDIA'S MULTIVARIATE KURTOSIS TESTS

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Output of skewness and kurtosis calculation

Sample size:  899
Number of variables:  3

Univariate skewness and kurtosis

                               Skewness SE_skew Z_skew Kurtosis SE_kurt Z_kurt
X...Active.Engagement..AE.        0.067   0.082  0.823   -0.176   0.163 -1.081
Critical.Thinking..CT.            0.144   0.082  1.766   -0.116   0.163 -0.715
Organizational.Commitment..OC.   -0.332   0.082 -4.075    0.026   0.163  0.162

Mardia's multivariate skewness and kurtosis
                 b          z       p-value
Skewness  0.4074636  61.051627 2.290813e-09
Kurtosis 17.3544761   6.444415 1.160472e-10
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TABLE 7 HYPOTHESIS TESTING DIRECT EFFECTS

Effect	Relationship	Beta	Mean	(STDEV)	t-Value	p-Value	Decision
			Direct relations				
H[1]	AE- OC	0.417	0.42	0.049	8.548	0.000	Yes
H[2]	CT- OC	0.112	0.113	0.053	2.112	0.017	Yes

Note: * p < 0.05, Active Engagement (AE); Critical Thinking (CT); organizational commitment(OC)
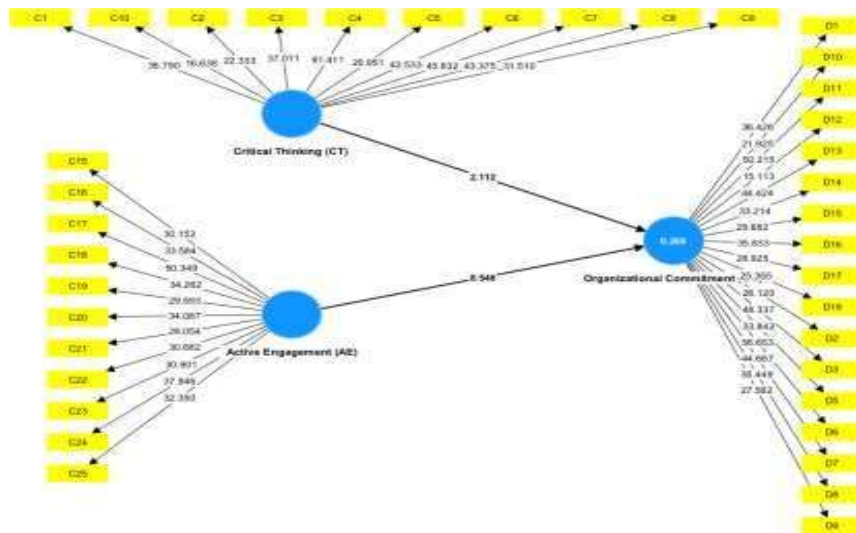
FIGURE 3. PLS-SEM SHOWING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS IN VARIABLE

VII. DISCUSSION

Followership Style

There are very few studies that analyse the notion of followership, thus this study, apart from pointing out the relationship between the style of followership and organisational commitment. The study on followership styles among teachers in Sarawak primary schools revealed a predominant exemplary style, with 92.5% of teachers exhibiting high commitment, proactivity, and engagement. This finding indicates a strong dedication and involvement in their roles within the organization. Additionally, other followership styles identified among teachers included pragmatist, alienated, conformist, and passive styles, with passive style notably absent in the surveyed teachers, suggesting a lack of disengagement and apathy within the sample (Arshad & Zaman, 2022). Understanding the diverse followership styles among teachers can assist educational institutions in customizing leadership and development programs to support and capitalize on the strengths of different follower types (Arshad & Zaman, 2022). By recognizing and valuing these various followership styles, organizations can foster a more inclusive and supportive environment that encourages collaboration, innovation, and organizational commitment among teachers.

The findings from this study align with the notion that followership research focuses on how follower behaviors relate to organizational outcomes, such as leadership and performance (Carsten et al., 2010b). The emphasis on followership styles, particularly the exemplary style, underscores the importance of followers in organizational settings and their impact on organizational commitment and effectiveness (Arshad & Zaman, 2022; Carsten et al., 2010b). Moreover, the absence of the passive style among teachers reflects a positive organizational culture that values engagement and active participation (Arshad & Zaman, 2022).

In conclusion, the prevalence of different followership styles among teachers in Sarawak primary schools highlights the significance of followers in contributing to organizational commitment. Recognizing and accommodating various followership styles can enhance organizational dynamics, promote a supportive work environment, and ultimately improve overall performance and commitment levels among teachers.

Active Engagement, Critical Thinking and Organizational Commitment

The discussion on the hypotheses regarding followership styles and organizational commitment among teachers in Sarawak primary schools provides valuable insights into the factors influencing teachers' dedication and engagement within the educational setting. Hypothesis 1 (H[1]) examined the correlation between follower's active engagement (AE) and organizational commitment (OC). The significant positive correlation found between these variables suggests that teachers who actively engage in their roles demonstrate higher levels of commitment to the organization. This finding aligns with previous research highlighting the importance of employee engagement in fostering organizational commitment. For example, the study by Blanchard et al. (2009) shows that exemplary followers' high active engagement was positively related to organizational commitment. Additionally, Busari et al. (2020) emphasized the moderating role of followership in the relationship between leadership styles and employees' reactions towards organizational change, underscoring the importance of followership in organizational dynamics. Teachers who are actively involved in their work, show initiative, and take ownership of their responsibilities are more likely to feel a strong sense of loyalty and dedication to the school. School administrators and leaders can leverage this relationship by promoting opportunities for teacher involvement, autonomy, and professional development to enhance organizational commitment among educators.

The positive correlation identified between critical thinking skills and organizational commitment indicates that teachers who demonstrate higher levels of critical thinking are also more committed to the organization. Critical thinking abilities enable educators to analyse situations, make informed decisions, and contribute meaningfully to the school environment. By valuing and nurturing critical thinking skills among teachers, educational institutions can cultivate a culture of innovation, problem-solving, and continuous improvement, which in turn can enhance organizational commitment .This study is in line with the findings by Graen & Uhl-Bien (1995) which is by emphasizing and fostering critical thinking skills among teachers, educational institutions can promote a culture of innovation, problem-solving, and continuous improvement, ultimately enhancing organizational commitment. This finding aligns with the notion that followership styles play a crucial role in organizational commitment. Research has shown that effective followership, characterized by taking initiative and co-managing tasks with superiors, can empower individuals and contribute to organizational success (Bunin et al., 2022). Moreover, the interaction between leadership and followership styles has been highlighted as a key factor influencing organizational citizenship behavior, work engagement, and job performance (Sheng Wen, 2023).

Overall, the discussion on these hypotheses underscores the importance of active engagement and critical thinking in shaping teachers' commitment to their organizations. By recognizing and promoting these qualities among educators, schools can create a supportive and empowering work environment that fosters a sense of belonging, purpose, and dedication among teachers. Future research could further explore the mechanisms through which active engagement and critical thinking influence organizational commitment, providing additional insights for enhancing teacher satisfaction, retention, and overall school effectiveness.

Theoretical Contributions

This study significantly advances theoretical understanding in several key areas. Firstly, it refines followership theory by categorizing various followership styles among teachers, notably highlighting the prevalence of the exemplary style, thus providing nuanced insights into follower dynamics within primary schools. Secondly, it integrates active engagement with organizational commitment, elucidating the link between individual engagement behaviors and commitment to the organization within the educational context. Thirdly, it recognizes critical thinking as a catalyst for organizational commitment among educators, expanding traditional perspectives on cognitive abilities' role in organizational settings. Additionally, this research enriches leadership theory by emphasizing the reciprocal influence between leaders and followers and the importance of understanding follower dynamics in shaping organizational outcomes. Lastly, it advances organizational behavior frameworks by offering empirical evidence on the interplay between followership styles, engagement behaviors, and organizational commitment, contributing to the development of comprehensive models applicable across various organizational settings beyond education.

Practical and Managerial Implications

This study's findings offer actionable insights for school leaders and managers in enhancing organizational commitment and effectiveness within educational institutions. By recognizing and understanding the diverse followership styles among teachers, leaders can tailor their approaches to effectively engage and motivate their staff, fostering a positive work environment. Managers can implement initiatives to promote active engagement among teachers through professional development opportunities and involvement in decision-making processes, thus increasing satisfaction and commitment. Furthermore, prioritizing the development of critical thinking skills through targeted training programs can enhance problem-solving capabilities and innovation within the organization. By creating a supportive work culture that values active engagement and critical thinking, organizations can strategically manage human resources to attract, develop, and retain teachers who contribute positively to organizational goals, ultimately improving educational outcomes.

VIII. LIMITATION AND CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights how bridging the gap between research and practice in education can be achieved through a deeper understanding of followership styles, active engagement, critical thinking, and organizational commitment among teachers. By recognizing and addressing these dynamics within educational settings, school leaders and managers can implement tailored strategies to foster a supportive work environment, enhance teacher motivation and satisfaction, and ultimately improve educational outcomes. While there are limitations to consider, such as the need for further research to explore cross-cultural variations and contextual factors, the insights gained from this study offer practical implications for bridging the gap between research and practice in education, ultimately contributing to the continuous improvement of teaching and learning experiences.

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