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**Intellectual Leadership and Lecturers' Academic Performance
in Sorong Private Higher Education: The Mediating Roles of
Organizational Trust and Affective Commitment**

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Abstract: Although leadership is recognized as a determinant of academic performance, the mechanisms linking intellectual leadership to performance remain underexplored, particularly in private higher education in Papua. This study examines the effect of intellectual leadership on lecturers' academic performance in private higher education institutions in Sorong Regency, Indonesia, with organizational trust and affective commitment as mediators. Using a quantitative approach, we analyzed data from a census-based survey of 137 lecturers using PLS-SEM. Intellectual leadership did not directly affect academic performance but significantly influenced organizational trust and affective commitment. Affective commitment significantly mediated the leadership performance relationship, whereas organizational trust did not. Thus, intellectual leadership enhances academic performance indirectly through affective commitment as a primary motivational mechanism. Evidence from a non-Western, non-metropolitan context extends Social Exchange Theory in intellectual leadership research. University leaders in similarly under-resourced regions should prioritize mentoring, recognition, and identity-building practices that strengthen lecturers' emotional attachment to their institutions.

Keywords: Intellectual Leadership, Organizational Trust, Affective Commitment, Academic Performance, Higher Education

Introduction

In recent years, universities worldwide have faced unprecedented pressure to transform (Read & Olcott, 2025). Increasing global competition in academic rankings, the push for knowledge-based innovation, and the paradigm shift from instruction-based education to an adaptive, research-oriented learning ecosystem have made faculty academic performance a

strategic variable in determining an institution's sustainability in the era of global knowledge competition (Meylani, 2026). In this context, higher education institutions must consistently encourage, maintain, and improve faculty academic performance, making this an urgent and valuable research agenda, particularly for institutions operating in environments with limited resources and still-developing academic infrastructure (Chavez, 2025). Leadership is widely recognized as one of the most influential determinants of task and organizational performance (Aboramadan, Dahleez, et al., 2020b; Borman & Motowidlo, 1997). However, most existing literature studies still focus on conventional forms of leadership, such as transformational leadership (Zhao & Jiang, 2025) and servant leadership (Barnes, 2015; Latif et al., 2021), which, while relevant, do not specifically capture the unique nature of the academic context where leadership authority is built on epistemic legitimacy, not solely on structural hierarchy. Intellectual Leadership, which refers to the ability of academic leaders to foster critical thinking, build a scientific culture, foster knowledge creation, and facilitate academic collaboration (Macfarlane, 2013), offers a much more contextual and relevant framework for understanding leadership in higher education. Conceptually, intellectual leadership has distinct characteristics and is not merely a contextual variant of transformational or servant leadership (Oleksiyenko & Ruan, 2019). Transformational leadership primarily derives influence through the articulation of a vision, inspirational motivation, and charismatic influence (Ravet-Brown et al., 2024), whereas servant leadership is rooted in an ethical orientation toward service and the development of followers (Aboramadan, Dahleez, et al., 2020a; Lemoine et al., 2019). In contrast, intellectual leadership derives legitimacy primarily from epistemic authority, specifically, the academic community's recognition of the leader's scholarly insight, research reputation, and capacity to shape and direct the intellectual agenda within a field of study (Doehne & Herfeld, 2023). This distinction carries significant theoretical implications, as it locates the source of leadership influence in scholarly credibility and competence rather than primarily in interpersonal style, charismatic appeal, or the leader's moral orientation (Doehne & Herfeld, 2023). Thus, intellectual leadership offers a more specific perspective for understanding how leadership influence is formed and exercised within academic communities, where leadership legitimacy stems not only from formal position but also from knowledge, expertise, and intellectual contributions recognized by peers (Mizrahi-Shtelman & Drori, 2023). However, empirical studies that systematically examine the role of intellectual leadership in academic performance remain very limited, especially outside Western countries (Eva et al., 2019; Jones & Harvey, 2017; Mantry et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the leadership and performance literature consistently shows that the influence of leadership on performance is not direct but rather operates through a series of psychological mechanisms and work attitudes that function as mediators (Aboramadan, Dahleez, et al., 2020b; K. A. Dahleez et al., 2023; Sönmez Çakır & Adigüzel, 2020). Two variables that are theoretically highly relevant but still underexplored in the context of intellectual leadership are organizational trust and affective commitment. Organizational trust reflects an individual's belief that the institution and its leaders act fairly, consistently, and reliably (R. C. Mayer et al., 1995; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000), while affective commitment describes an individual's deep emotional attachment and identification with their organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Previous research has shown that lecturers with high levels of trust and affective commitment tend to demonstrate better performance, stronger loyalty, and more active involvement in the implementation of the Tridharma of Higher Education (Aboramadan, Dahleez, et al., 2020b; K. A. Dahleez et al., 2021; K. Dahleez & Aboramadan, 2022). However, no research has explicitly examined how

intellectual leadership jointly activates these two mediating mechanisms within an integrated structural model.

This study is based on Social Exchange Theory (SET) proposed by Bierstedt & Blau (1965). SET theory explains that the relationship between leaders and organizational members is built on the principle of reciprocal social exchange, where when leaders invest valuable resources in the form of intellectual support, academic guidance, scientific role models, and appreciation for the contributions of organizational members, the members of the organization will respond by increasing trust in the institution and strengthening their emotional attachment as a form of equal exchange (Bierstedt & Blau, 1965). This sense of trust and emotional attachment, in turn, will stimulate intrinsic motivation, transforming intentions into real, sustainable academic performance. Although SET has been widely used in organizational research, its specific application to explain the mechanisms of intellectual leadership, organizational trust, affective commitment, and academic performance in higher education environments has not been comprehensively studied, especially in non-Western ecosystems (Eva et al., 2019; Oleksiyenko & Ruan, 2019). Integrating organizational trust and affective commitment as joint mediators advances SET beyond a simple empirical extension (Lleo et al., 2023). It specifies that the single reciprocity norm central to SET actually operates through two distinguishable exchange currencies (Ahmad et al., 2023), a cognitive-evaluative currency (trust, based on judgments of the leader's ability, benevolence, and integrity) (Legood et al., 2021) and an affective-relational currency (commitment, based on emotional identification) (Slob et al., 2023). Positioning these as parallel, empirically separable mediators allows this study to test which currency carries the reciprocal exchange in intellectual leadership relationships (Mansor et al., 2021), a theoretical refinement that prior applications of SET to leadership have not made explicit (Ahmad et al., 2023). From an empirical gap perspective, most research on leadership and academic performance in higher education has been conducted in developed countries or in large metropolitan cities in developing countries, such as Jakarta, Bandung, or Surabaya in Indonesia. The context of higher education in remote and disadvantaged regions, with their unique institutional dynamics, organizational cultures, and resource challenges, remains sparsely represented in the international literature (Oleksiyenko & Ruan, 2019). Universities in Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua, Indonesia, represent this context: institutions operating in a region with a developing academic infrastructure, limited access to research resources, and ongoing pressure to improve academic quality amid unique and complex social, cultural, and geographical conditions. In this situation, intellectual leadership, with its capacity to build a conducive academic environment, foster trust, and strengthen faculty commitment, has the potential to play a strategic role distinct from the context of mature institutions (Lentell, 2014; Macfarlane, 2011; Uslu, 2020)

A critical review of the existing literature identifies at least three interrelated research gaps. First, there is a conceptual gap: although intellectual leadership is increasingly mentioned in academic discourse, empirical testing of its influence on academic performance through psychological mediation mechanisms remains very limited (Mantry et al., 2023; Oleksiyenko & Ruan, 2019). Second, the mediation model has a gap: no studies have simultaneously examined the dual roles of organizational trust and affective commitment as mediators within a single structural model linking intellectual leadership to academic performance. Consequently, the precise mechanisms of transmission remain poorly understood (K. Dahleez & Aboramadan, 2022). Third, a contextual gap remains: almost no studies have examined this relationship in higher education institutions in non-metropolitan, non-

Western regions, particularly in Eastern Indonesia, where institutional characteristics and academic leadership challenges differ fundamentally from those in previously studied contexts (Oleksiyenko & Ruan, 2019). Referring to these three empirical gaps, this study is designed to fill the gap in the literature by proposing and empirically testing a mediation model that integrates intellectual leadership, organizational trust, affective commitment, and academic performance in a coherent structural framework at private universities in Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua, Indonesia, using a quantitative approach with the Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS) method. The findings of this study are expected to provide an evidence-based basis for academic leadership development policies, lecturer performance improvement strategies, and institutional quality improvement program designs at universities operating in developing regions, particularly in Eastern Indonesia, which is still very underrepresented in international higher education leadership research (Silaji et al., 2025; Uslu, 2020). This research is urgent for two reasons. Practically, private universities in eastern Indonesian regions such as Sorong Regency must raise faculty research and teaching performance to meet national accreditation standards. Yet, they must do so with limited resources and without a clear, evidence-based account of which leadership-related mechanism drives that performance. Theoretically, the persistence of leadership research that treats trust and commitment as interchangeable "attitudinal" mediators, rather than testing them as competing pathways, has left it unclear which mechanism institutions should prioritize when designing leadership development interventions. This study therefore addresses the following research questions: (1) Does intellectual leadership directly improve lecturers' academic performance, or does its effect depend on intervening psychological mechanisms? (2) Do organizational trust and affective commitment mediate this relationship equally, or does one mechanism dominate the other? Addressing these questions directly determines the novelty and contribution of this study: rather than treating trust and affective commitment as generic, interchangeable mediators, as most prior leadership-performance studies have done, this study tests them simultaneously within a single structural model to identify which psychological mechanism actually transmits the effect of intellectual leadership to performance and does so in a private, non-metropolitan higher education setting in Eastern Indonesia that has not previously been examined in this literature.

Literature Review

Academic Performance

Academic performance in higher education has evolved from a narrow emphasis on measurable outcomes toward a multidimensional construct reflecting academic staff contributions to teaching, research, and community engagement (Paudel, 2021). Earlier conceptualizations emphasized observable outcomes and individual capabilities, whereas recent perspectives recognize the interaction of individual, affective, environmental, and organizational factors (Xu et al., 2026). This multidimensionality is particularly relevant to lecturers, whose performance encompasses research productivity, teaching effectiveness, scholarly contributions, and community service (Marín et al., 2025; Paudel, 2021). From a performance-management perspective, performance reflects the interaction of individual ability and motivation with organizational support and contextual conditions (Garengo & Betto, 2024). Importantly, academic performance is also influenced by leadership, organizational trust, and commitment, although their effects vary across contexts (Macfarlane, 2011; Sihombing et al., 2024). Thus, leadership may influence performance

through psychological and relational mechanisms. Trust can facilitate confident engagement in institutional and scholarly activities, while affective commitment can strengthen willingness to exert effort beyond formal requirements. However, existing studies largely examine these factors independently, leaving limited evidence on how intellectual leadership translates into performance through trust and emotional attachment, particularly in resource-constrained private higher education institutions in Papua. Accordingly, this study conceptualizes academic performance as a multidimensional outcome of lecturers' professional contributions.

Intellectual Leadership

Intellectual leadership has emerged as a distinctive form of leadership in higher education because conventional leadership perspectives may not fully capture influence within knowledge-intensive and collegial academic environments (Macfarlane et al., 2024). The literature generally defines intellectual leadership as the capacity to generate, develop, disseminate, and institutionalize ideas that shape the intellectual direction and practices of academic communities (Ibarra-Cisneros et al., 2023; Jing et al., 2025). However, conceptualizations differ regarding its sources and processes. (Macfarlane, 2011) emphasizes academics' roles in shaping disciplinary and institutional intellectual agendas, whereas (Yielder & Codling, 2004) ground it in epistemic authority, reflected in peers' recognition of superior knowledge, scholarly expertise, and intellectual credibility. (Youngman, 2012) Further conceptualizes intellectual leadership as an interactive process involving critical dialogue, mentoring, collaborative inquiry, and intellectual culture. Collectively, these perspectives position intellectual leadership as a relational process that converts intellectual credibility into collective influence. Unlike transformational leadership, which relies primarily on vision, inspiration, and charisma, intellectual leadership derives authority from the perceived quality, originality, and legitimacy of knowledge and ideas (B. M. Bass, 2008; Macfarlane et al., 2024; Yielder & Codling, 2004). Nevertheless, empirical evidence remains limited regarding how epistemic authority generates organizational and individual outcomes. Insufficient attention has been paid to psychological and relational mechanisms linking intellectual leadership to lecturers' academic performance. This study addresses this gap by examining organizational trust and affective commitment as mediating mechanisms in private higher education institutions in Papua.

Organizational Trust

Organizational trust is a central relational mechanism in organizational behavior because it shapes how individuals respond to uncertainty, vulnerability, and interdependence (R. C. Mayer et al., 1995; McAllister, 1995). Trust involves willingness to accept vulnerability based on the belief that another party is reliable and will act in ways important to the trustor (Gill et al., 2024). Scholars distinguish trust across targets and levels, including interpersonal, supervisory, and organizational trust, each with distinct antecedents and consequences (Härenstam et al., 2024; Salanova et al., 2021). Importantly, organizational trust differs from confidence, cooperation, and organizational commitment. Confidence concerns expectations of favorable outcomes, whereas trust involves vulnerability under uncertainty; cooperation is a behavioral response that trust may facilitate (Rostovtseva et al., 2023). Likewise, trust reflects willingness to rely on a particular target, whereas commitment represents psychological attachment and intention to maintain an organizational relationship (Hunt & Morgan, 1995). Empirical evidence indicates that trust can promote cooperation,

commitment, and performance, although these relationships vary across trust targets and contexts (Karhapää et al., 2022; Vanhala & Tzafrir, 2021). This contextual sensitivity is especially relevant in higher education, where professional autonomy, collegiality, and epistemic authority shape academics' evaluations of leaders and institutions. However, research has focused more on trust as an antecedent than on its role as a mediator linking knowledge-based leadership to academic performance. This study therefore examines organizational trust as a mediating mechanism through which intellectual leadership may translate scholarly credibility into improved lecturers' academic performance.

Affective Commitment

Affective commitment refers to employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in an organization and represents the desire-based dimension of organizational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1991; Santana-Martins et al., 2022). Unlike continuance and normative commitment, affective commitment reflects a genuine willingness to remain and contribute because employees identify with the organization rather than because of economic costs or perceived obligations (Pahos & Galanaki, 2022). Meta-analytic evidence indicates that affective commitment is more strongly associated with attendance, retention, organizational citizenship behavior, and extra-role performance than the other commitment dimensions (Riketta, 2002). In higher education, affective commitment is particularly relevant because lecturers' performance depends not only on formal responsibilities but also on discretionary engagement in research, teaching innovation, mentoring, and institutional service (He et al., 2026). Importantly, affective commitment to the institution differs from professional or departmental commitment, as academics may identify strongly with their discipline or colleagues without developing equivalent attachment to their university (Kellerer & Süß, 2026). Nevertheless, existing research has paid limited attention to how knowledge-based leadership can cultivate affective commitment and, in turn, enhance academic performance, particularly in higher education contexts. Accordingly, this study conceptualizes affective commitment as a mediating mechanism through which intellectual leadership, grounded in scholarly credibility and epistemic authority, may strengthen lecturers' identification with their institution and motivate greater academic performance.

Development Hypothesis

Intellectual Leadership and Academic Performance

Intellectual leadership has been conceptualized as a form of leadership exercised through generating, disseminating, and institutionalizing scientific knowledge and vision within the academic community (Macfarlane, 2011). Unlike administrative or transactional leadership (B. Bass, 1981), intellectual leadership derives its influence from epistemic authority, the recognition by colleagues and subordinates that a leader possesses superior scientific insight, research credibility, and intellectual vision (Macfarlane, 2013). In higher education institutions, this form of leadership is crucial for academic performance because it operates directly on the intellectual culture, research orientation, and scientific ambition of those within the leader's sphere of influence (Tight, 2014). The mechanisms by which intellectual leadership directly enhances academic performance are diverse and interconnected (Bolden et al., 2012). First, intellectually credible leaders set high scientific standards and model rigorous academic practice, creating a normative environment in which high performance becomes an internalized expectation rather than an externally imposed requirement

(McIntosh & Antes, 2025). Second, intellectual leaders provide substantial scientific mentorship, including feedback on research ideas, collaborative writing, and critical engagement with colleagues' work, which directly builds the competencies necessary for high academic performance (Macfarlane, 2013). Third, by articulating a compelling intellectual vision, intellectual leaders generate a sense of shared scientific purpose that motivates faculty members to align their individual research agendas with the department's collective intellectual goals, enhancing the focus and quality of their scientific output (Kellerer & Süß, 2026; Macfarlane, 2011; McIntosh & Antes, 2025).

Empirical evidence supports a positive relationship between intellectual leadership and academic performance (Sengendo & Musinguzi, 2024). A landmark study by Bryman (2007) of effective academic leadership in UK higher education identified intellectual leadership characterized by scholarly visibility, research vision, and intellectual mentorship as one of the strongest correlates of departmental research performance and faculty professional satisfaction (Floyd, 2012). Furthermore, Floyd (2012) found that faculty members who perceived their leaders as intellectually credible and personally invested in their development reported higher levels of research productivity, teaching quality, and professional engagement (Floyd, 2012; Shin & Jung, 2014). These findings align with broader educational leadership research showing that leaders who combine intellectual authority with relational support create the motivational and cultural conditions needed for sustained high performance (Afra Fitriani et al., 2025; Bellibaş et al., 2021; Keravnos et al., 2025; Macfarlane, 2013; Uslu, 2020). Therefore, this study argues that better intellectual leadership will enhance academic performance. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Intellectual Leadership has a positive and significant influence on academic performance

The Effect of Intellectual Leadership on Organizational Trust

Studies by D. M. Mayer et al. (2012) define organizational trust as the willingness of organizational members to be vulnerable to the actions of their leaders and institutions based on positive expectations of their motives and competence, which are essentially shaped by the perceived qualities of organizational leaders (R. C. Mayer et al., 1995; Reynolds & Lander, 2024). Social Exchange Theory Bierstedt & Blau, (1965) provides a primary theoretical explanation of the relationship between intellectual leadership and trust, whereby when leaders provide valuable relational and intellectual resources, including scholarly mentorship, peer respect, transparent communication, and genuine advocacy for faculty interests, organizational members respond with high levels of trust as a reciprocal investment in the exchange relationship (Akter et al., 2024). Intellectual leaders are uniquely positioned to generate organizational trust through multiple pathways aligned with the three antecedents of trust (R. C. Mayer et al., 1995): ability, benevolence, and integrity (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). In terms of ability, intellectually credible leaders, those recognized as leading scholars in their fields, who maintain an active research agenda, and who demonstrate deep disciplinary expertise, are perceived as competent to guide the intellectual direction of their departments, generating ability-based trust in their professional judgment (Byun et al., 2017; R. C. Mayer et al., 1995; Sutherland & Yoshida, 2015). In terms of benevolence, intellectual leaders who invest time and energy in colleagues' intellectual development, engage genuinely with their ideas, and support their professional advancement signal positive intentions that foster affect-based trust (González-Cánovas et al., 2024; McAllister, 1995). In terms of integrity, intellectual leaders who uphold scholarly values, including rigor, honesty, openness to

criticism, and fair recognition of colleagues' contributions, demonstrate the principled consistency that underpins integrity-based trust (Ete et al., 2022; T. L. Simons, 1999).

Empirical research supports the proposition that the quality of intellectual leadership is a significant predictor of organizational trust in higher education (Akter et al., 2024; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Reynolds & Lander, 2024). Tschannen-Moran (2014) explains that faculty members' trust in academic leadership is strongly predicted by their perceptions of the leader's professional competence, personal benevolence, and ethical consistency dimensions directly related to core components of intellectual leadership (Byun et al., 2017; Hu et al., 2022; Sutherland & Yoshida, 2015). Studies by Serpa & Sá (2022) and Tierney & Lechuga (2004) found that academic cultures characterized by intellectual vitality and scholarly generosity, both hallmarks of strong intellectual leadership, are associated with significantly higher levels of interpersonal and institutional trust. These findings align with broader organizational research showing that leaders' behavioral integrity, the alignment between their stated values and their actual behavior, is one of the strongest predictors of subordinate trust (Ete et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2023; Sezer & Uzun, 2023; T. Simons et al., 2022). Based on these theoretical explanations and empirical findings, this study argues that better intellectual leadership will further enhance organizational trust. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: Intellectual Leadership has a positive and significant influence on organizational trust

The Effect of Intellectual Leadership on Affective Commitment

Affective commitment is an employee's emotional attachment to, and identification with, the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1991). Affective commitment is described as a response to organizational and leadership conditions that meet employees' psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Intellectual leadership is well-suited to meeting these needs in the academic context. By providing intellectually stimulating challenges, granting faculty members meaningful autonomy in their scholarly activities, and fostering a sense of communal identity around shared scholarly goals, intellectual leaders create the conditions in which deep emotional attachment to the organization is most likely to develop (Macfarlane, 2011; Miao et al., 2014; Straatmann et al., 2018). Transformational leadership theory from Avolio et al. (200) and B. M. Bass (2008) provides a complementary theoretical foundation for the relationship between intellectual leadership and affective commitment. Intellectual leadership shares key features with transformational leadership, including the articulation of an inspiring vision, stimulation of followers' intellectual growth, and demonstration of individualized consideration, which have been consistently associated with increased affective commitment in meta-analytic research (Banks et al., 2016; Meyer et al., 2002; Mynbayeva et al., 2024; Rodenas, 2025). Specifically in higher education, the capacity of intellectual leaders to foster a shared scholarly purpose and demonstrate genuine concern for faculty members' professional development appears highly effective in generating organizational identification and emotional investment that define affective commitment (Billot, 2010).

The empirical literature provides substantial support for a positive relationship between academic leadership quality and affective commitment (Bolden et al., 2012; Borman & Motowidlo, 1997; Floyd, 2012). Floyd (2012) found that faculty members' perceptions of their leaders' intellectual engagement and personal support were among the strongest

predictors of their affective commitment to their departments. Bolden et al. (2009) also found that distributed intellectual leadership, characterized by a shared scientific vision, collegial mentorship, and shared understanding, was associated with significantly higher levels of faculty commitment and professional engagement than more hierarchical or administratively focused leadership styles. These findings align with theoretical arguments (Macfarlane, 2011) that intellectual leadership, by renewing faculty members' sense of scholarly purpose and professional identity, is one of the most powerful instruments available to academic institutions for fostering genuine organizational commitment. Based on these theoretical explanations and empirical findings, this study argues that better intellectual leadership will further enhance affective commitment. Thus, the hypothesis proposed is as follows:

H3: Intellectual leadership has a positive and significant influence on affective commitment

The Effect of Organizational Trust on Academic Performance

Organizational trust is theorized as a critical driver of academic performance by influencing members' psychological safety, collaborative behavior, and discretionary effort (Schilke & Lumineau, 2023). The concept of psychological safety, as explained by Edmondson (1999), is that the belief that one can take intellectual risks, voice unconventional ideas, and engage in open criticism without fear of punitive consequences provides a key mechanism by which organizational trust translates into performance-enhancing behaviors (Clarke, 2010; Edmondson, 1999; Johnsen, 2025; Montgomery, 2025). In the academic context, psychological safety is crucial for shaping scientific innovation; rigorous criticism and creative risk-taking are the behaviors most closely associated with high-quality research, and all three are inhibited by low-trust environments characterized by scrutiny, competition, or perceived unfairness (Edmondson, 1999; Zhu et al., 2013). Social Exchange Theory: Bierstedt & Blau (1965) offer an additional explanation for the relationship between trust and performance. Bierstedt & Blau (1965) define faculty members who trust their organizational leaders and institutions as perceiving a relational norm of reciprocity that motivates discretionary investment in organizational goals (Akhtar et al., 2019; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This manifests in the academic context as a willingness to invest extra effort in research, teaching, and mentoring activities beyond formal role requirements, behaviors directly linked to superior academic performance (Newman et al., 2017). Conversely, low levels of organizational trust result in defensive behaviors, including withdrawal of effort, disengagement from collaborative activities, and reduced investment in long-term scholarly projects, all of which reduce academic performance (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Tan & Lim, 2009).

Empirical evidence supports a positive relationship between organizational trust and academic performance in higher education (Akter et al., 2024; Colquitt et al., 2007; Reynolds & Lander, 2024). Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2000) explained that teacher trust in school leadership is positively related to professional engagement, collaborative practices, and a willingness to adopt innovative teaching behaviors, which are isomorphic with high academic performance at the faculty level. Specifically in higher education, research by Erlyani et al., (2024), Gonzales, (2022), Kosonen & Ikonen, (2022), Serpa & Sá, (2022), and Tan & Lim, (2009) documented that a highly trusting academic culture is associated with greater research productivity, higher teaching satisfaction, and more active participation in institutional governance and stewardship all broadly interpreted dimensions of academic performance. Based on the theoretical explanation and empirical findings, this study argues that greater

organizational trust will improve academic performance. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: Organizational Trust has a positive and significant effect on academic performance

The Effect of Affective Commitment on Academic Performance

The relationship between affective commitment and performance is one of the most studied in organizational behavior, and substantial meta-analytic evidence supports its positive direction (Jaramillo et al., 2005; Meyer et al., 2002; Riketta, 2002). Several frameworks support this relationship. Goal-setting theory: Tosi et al. (1991) suggest that affectively committed employees are more likely to set challenging personal performance goals that align with organizational goals and to persist in the face of obstacles that might discourage less committed individuals. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) provides a complementary explanation: affective commitment represents an identified or integrated form of motivation in which organizational goals are experienced as personally meaningful and intrinsically valuable, resulting in sustained effort and creative engagement associated with high performance. In higher education, the relationship between affective commitment and academic performance operates through several distinct pathways (Jiatong et al., 2022; Karatepe & Karadas, 2012; Loan, 2020). First, affectively committed faculty members invest discretionary effort in research, teaching preparation, and student mentoring beyond what is formally required, directly enhancing the quality of their scholarly and pedagogical contributions (Marques et al., 2024; McCune, 2021; Winter, 2009). Second, committed individuals are more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors, including informal knowledge sharing, collegial support, and voluntary participation in departmental activities that build the collective intellectual capital of their academic community and create positive spillover effects on colleagues' performance (Dong & Phuong, 2018; MacKenzie et al., 2001; Mohammad et al., 2010; Organ, 1988). Third, affective commitment predicts resilience in the face of academic adversity, suggesting that scholars will demonstrate greater persistence after research setbacks, manuscript rejections, and teaching difficulties, enabling them to maintain high performance over the long periods that characterize scholarly work (Luthans et al., 2010; Riza et al., 2025).

Empirical research in higher education contexts consistently supports a positive relationship between affective commitment and academic performance (Aboramadan, Dahleez, et al., 2020b; Sarwat et al., 2011; Shao et al., 2022; Winarno & Hermana, 2019). Aboramadan et al. (2020) found that faculty members' affective commitment to their institution significantly predicted both research productivity and teaching engagement, with the effect mediated by intrinsic motivation and professional identity. Similar findings have been reported in studies of academic commitment in various national contexts, including studies conducted in Asian, European, and North American higher education systems, indicating that the commitment-performance relationship is robust across cultural and institutional variations (Fischer & Mansell, 2009; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Meyer et al., 1989; Sommer et al., 1996). Based on the theoretical description and empirical findings, this study argues that better affective commitment will further improve academic performance. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: Affective Commitment has a positive and significant effect on academic performance

Mediating Role of Organizational Trust in the Relationship Between Intellectual Leadership and Academic Performance

The proposition that organizational trust mediates the relationship between intellectual leadership and academic performance stems from an integrated application of Social Exchange Theory (Bierstedt & Blau, 1965) and the trust model (R. C. Mayer et al., 1995). Within this framework, intellectual leadership is a leadership input that generates trust as a psychological response. When academic leaders demonstrate the ability, benevolence, and integrity that characterize effective intellectual leadership, individuals can develop trust as a form of re (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Legood et al., 2021). This trust, in turn, enables psychological safety, cooperative engagement, and discretionary effort that directly result in high academic performance (Edmondson, 1999; Tan & Lim, 2009). The mediation logic in this study follows a three-stage causal chain. In the first stage, intellectual leadership generates organizational trust by providing individuals with evidence of the leader's scientific competence (ability), genuine investment in their professional well-being (benevolence), and adherence to academic values (integrity) (R. C. Mayer et al., 1995). In the second stage, organizational trust fosters performance-enhancing behaviors, such as intellectual risk-taking, research collaboration, and sustained scientific endeavor, by creating an environment of psychological safety and mutual obligation (Edmondson, 1999). In the third stage, these trust-mediated behaviors directly translate into superior academic performance outcomes, including research productivity, teaching quality (Akter et al., 2024; K. Dahleez & Aboramadan, 2022); K. Dahleez & Aboramadan, 2022).

Dirks & Ferrin (2002) provided fundamental meta-analytic evidence for the mediating role of trust in the leadership-performance relationship, finding that trust partially mediates the effects of leadership quality on employee outcomes across various organizational contexts. In higher education, Aboramadan et al. (2020), Cheng et al. (2024), and K. Dahleez & Aboramadan (2022) demonstrated that leaders' intellectual credibility influences performance in part through its positive effects on trust and psychological safety. These findings support the theoretical proposition that organizational trust is an important mediating mechanism through which intellectual leadership translates into superior academic performance outcomes (Floyd, 2012; Joseph & Winston, 2005; Schilke & Lumineau, 2023). Based on these theoretical explanations and empirical findings, this study argues that organizational trust mediates the relationship between intellectual leadership and performance. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H6: Organizational Trust Mediates the Relationship Between Intellectual Leadership and Academic Performance

Mediating Role of Affective Commitment in the Relationship Between Intellectual Leadership and Academic Performance

The proposition that affective commitment mediates the relationship between intellectual leadership and academic performance is theoretically grounded in the organizational behavior literature on leadership, motivation, and performance (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Herscovitch & Meyer (2002) provide the primary theoretical framework: affective commitment serves as a motivating force that channels relational and intellectual resources provided by leaders into performance-enhancing efforts and behaviors. When intellectual leaders provide valuable scholarly guidance, create an inspiring intellectual vision, and demonstrate genuine concern for faculty members' professional development, they generate

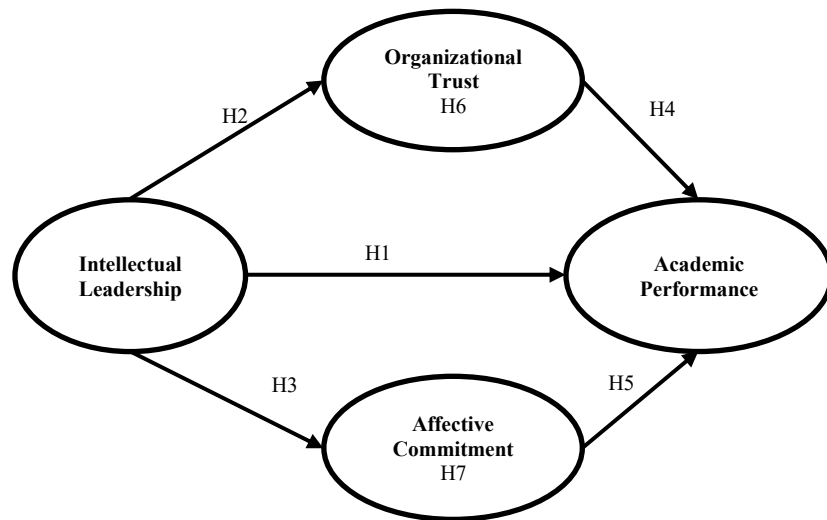
affective commitment as an emotional response to leadership input. This commitment, in turn, motivates discretionary effort, intrinsic motivation, and professional resilience, which are directly linked to high academic performance (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Macfarlane, 2011).

Empirical research directly supports the proposition that affective commitment mediates the relationship between intellectual leadership and academic performance (Aboramadan, Dahleez, et al., 2020b; Rowold et al., 2014). A study by Floyd (2012) demonstrated that the positive effects of academic leadership quality on faculty members' research productivity and teaching engagement were largely mediated by faculty members' affective commitment to their departments and institutions, suggesting that the performance-enhancing effects of high-quality leadership operate largely through the motivational pathway of commitment. A meta-analysis by J. P. Meyer et al. (2002) further established that affective commitment consistently mediated the effects of various leadership and organizational variables on performance, underscoring the robustness of this mediation mechanism across organizational contexts. In the specific context of higher education, the mediation pathway of affective commitment is of theoretical interest given the central roles of intrinsic motivation and professional identity in academic work (Billot, 2010). Faculty members whose leaders cultivate their intellectual passion and professional identity a core function of intellectual leadership develop a form of affective commitment that is strongly linked to their scholarly identity, resulting in sustained and mutually reinforcing motivation for high academic performance that is more enduring and effective than commitment based on external rewards or normative obligations (Aboramadan, Albashiti, et al., 2020; Aboramadan, Dahleez, et al., 2020b; Billot, 2010; Luthans et al., 2010; Sommer et al., 1996). Based on the theoretical explanation and empirical findings, this study argues that affective commitment mediates the relationship between intellectual leadership and performance. Thus, the proposed hypothesis is as follows:

H7: Affective commitment mediates the relationship between intellectual leadership and academic performance

This study develops a research model examining how intellectual leadership influences academic performance in higher education, with organizational trust and affective commitment as mediating factors. This model assumes that intellectual leadership can create an academic work environment characterized by intellectual stimulation, academic integrity, and support for professional development. These conditions subsequently increase individuals' trust in the organization and strengthen lecturers' emotional attachment to the institution. Furthermore, this model examines the role of organizational trust and affective commitment as the main psychological mechanisms mediating the influence of intellectual leadership on lecturers' academic performance. By integrating the dimensions of leadership, work attitudes, and performance, the proposed model provides a comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding how intellectual leadership drives sustainable academic performance in higher education environments, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework and Hypothesized Relationships



Methods

Research Design

This study follows a quantitative methodology and deductive research approach based on the principles and views of positivism, which implies verification of theory through empirical observation and assumes that cause determines effect (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to examine the effect of intellectual leadership on lecturers' academic performance, with organizational trust and affective commitment as mediating variables. The study was conducted in the private higher education sector in Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua. The relationships between variables were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS), which was chosen because of its suitability in testing complex causal models and its effectiveness in relatively limited sample sizes (Hair, J. F.; Black, W. C.; Babin, B. J.; Anderson, 2014; Legate et al., 2024). Hypothesis testing includes evaluating the measurement model (outer model), the structural model (inner model), and analyzing indirect effects to test the mediating role.

Population and Sample

The study population comprised all lecturers working at private universities in Sorong Regency. Based on data from the Higher Education Service Institution Region XIV (LLDIKTI XIV, 2026), two universities in the region are still in the institutional development stage. These two universities were selected as research locations because they are the largest institutions in Sorong Regency in terms of organizational size, number of faculties, and number of academic programs offered. The total population of lecturers at these two institutions was 254 people. After screening this population against the inclusion and exclusion criteria established for this study, 200 lecturers were identified as eligible to participate. The inclusion criteria were: (1) permanent/active lecturers registered in the Higher Education Database (PDDikti) at the two institutions; (2) having a minimum length of service of one year, to ensure adequate exposure to institutional leadership and organizational trust dynamics; and (3) willing to voluntarily participate in the study. The

exclusion criteria were: (1) lecturers on study leave, or extended absence during the data collection period; and (2) lecturers with less than one year of tenure at the institution. These criteria follow standard survey-based research practice for defining respondent eligibility (U. Sekaran, 2016). Given the population characteristics and research objectives, the study used a census-based survey approach (Fielding et al., 1995) by distributing questionnaires to all 200 eligible lecturers who met the research criteria at both institutions.

Instrument Development

The research instrument was developed as a structured questionnaire that measures intellectual leadership, organizational trust, affective commitment, and academic performance among lecturers. All statements were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where a value of 1 indicates strongly disagree, and a value of 5 indicates strongly agree. A five-point Likert scale was chosen because it effectively captures variations in respondents' attitudes and is suitable for PLS-based SEM analysis. The validity and reliability of the instrument were evaluated through testing the measurement model in SEM-PLS analysis. Table 1 presents, for each construct, the source, the underlying dimensions/indicators, and the exact wording of every measurement item used in this study. Each construct is further described below, specifying the number of items, the original scale developer(s), and a sample item

Table 1. **Measurement Development**

Construct	Source		Dimensions		Indicator Item
Intellectual Leadership	Macfarlane (2013); Uslu (2020)		Knowledge	Producer,	I contribute new knowledge and ideas that are valuable to my academic community (IL001)
			Academic	Citizen,	I actively contribute to the development of my academic institution (IL002)
			Boundary	Public	I connect academic knowledge with ideas and perspectives beyond my own discipline (IL003)
			Transgressor, Intellectual		My leader actively guides and supports the intellectual development and academic careers of lecturers (IL004)
Organizational Trust	Mayer et al. (1995)		Ability, Benevolence, and Integrity		My university has the competence and capability to achieve its institutional goals (OT001)
					For the most part, this organization treats its employees fairly (OT002)
					My university can make sound decisions regarding academic and organizational matters (OT003)
					I can rely on my university to competently handle issues that affect lecturers (OT004)

Construct	Source	Dimensions	Indicator Item
Affective Commitment	Allen & Meyer (1990)	Emotional attachment, identification, and involvement with the organization	My university genuinely cares about the well-being of its lecturers (OT005)
			My university considers the interests of lecturers when making important decisions (OT006)
			My university is willing to provide support when lecturers face difficulties in their work (OT007)
			I believe that my university would not intentionally take actions that could harm its lecturers (OT008)
			My university consistently keeps the promises it makes to lecturers (OT009)
			My university acts according to ethical principles in dealing with lecturers (OT010)
			My university is honest and transparent in communicating important decisions to lecturers (OT011)
			My university consistently follows the principles and commitments it communicates to lecturers (OT012)
			I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career at this university (AC001)
			I feel emotionally attached to this university (AC002)
			This university has a great deal of personal meaning for me (AC003)
			I really feel as if this university's problems are my own (AC004)
Academic performance	Aboramadan et al. (2020); Dahleez &	Teaching Performance; Research Performance;	This academic institution treats me fairly (AC005)
			I feel a strong sense of belonging to this university (AC006)
			I enjoy discussing my university with people outside it (AC007).
			I am proud to tell others that I am a member of this university (AC008).
			I feel personally involved in what happens at this university (AC009)
			I consistently achieve the teaching objectives assigned to me (AP001)

Construct	Source	Dimensions	Indicator Item
	Aboramadan (2022)	Academic/Institutional Service	I perform my teaching responsibilities effectively (AP002) I prepare and deliver my courses effectively to facilitate students' learning (AP003) I actively conduct research relevant to my academic field (AP004) I regularly produce scholarly outputs such as journal articles, conference papers, or other research publications (AP005) I actively guide students in completing their final assignments, theses, or dissertations to a high academic standard (AP006) I actively participate in academic and institutional activities at my university (AP007) I contribute my academic expertise to community service and outreach activities (AP008) I contribute constructively to the development of my department and university (AP009)

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted by distributing questionnaires to lecturers at two universities in Sorong Regency. To increase the response rate, this study used the drop-off-and-pick-up method, which has been proven effective in organizational survey studies (Ackoff et al., 2010). We distributed 200 questionnaires, and 137 were complete and suitable for analysis, yielding a response rate of 68.5%, which is considered adequate for empirical analysis. The collected data were then analyzed using SEM-PLS with bootstrapping to test the significance of direct paths and mediation effects (Henseler et al., 2009).

Findings

Measurement Model Assessment

In our measurement model, we examined three criteria to assess internal consistency: item loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR). Figure 2 and Table 2 show that all standardized loadings ranged from 0.719 to 0.941, indicating significant loadings and no need to remove any items. Furthermore, the results indicate that the AVE and CR values are satisfactory and provide evidence of the constructs' convergent validity. The AVE values for intellectual leadership (0.849), organizational trust (0.706), affective commitment (0.749), and academic performance (0.821) exceed 0.5, as suggested by Hair et al. (2019). The CR values for intellectual leadership (0.957), organizational trust (0.966),

affective commitment (0.964), and academic performance (0.976) exceed 0.7, as suggested by Hair et al. 2019).

To examine discriminant validity, we used the general method of Fornell & Larcker (1981), which assesses discriminant validity by calculating the square root of the average variance extracted. The latter value must be higher than the correlation between the examined variables. Table 2 shows that the square root of the AVE value is higher than the correlation, indicating that the discriminant validity condition is met. In terms of overall model fit, the standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR) value is below the cutoff point of 0.053, while the normed fit index (NFI) is greater than the cutoff point of 0.816, as recommended by Hair et al. 2019).

To test the discriminant validity condition, we used Fornell & Larcker (1981); we compared the square root of each latent variable's AVE with the correlations between the latent variables. Table 2 shows that all square roots of the AVEs are higher than the correlations between the tested variables. Therefore, the discriminant validity condition is met.

Figure 2. PLS-SEM Structural Model and Measurement Results

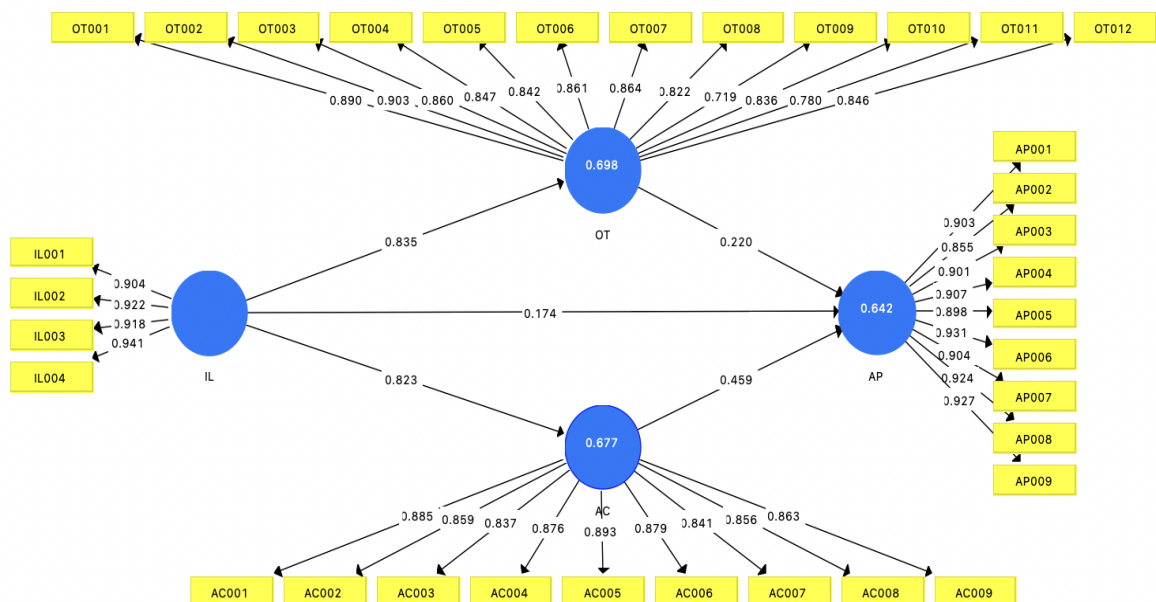


Table 2. Loadings, Significance levels, Cronbach's alpha, and Composite reliability

Variable	Item Indicators	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Intellectual Leadership	IL001	0.904	0.941	0.957	0.849
	IL002	0.922			
	IL003	0.918			
	IL004	0.941			
Organizational Trust	OT001	0.890	0.962	0.966	0.706
	OT002	0.903			
	OT003	0.860			

Variable	Item Indicators	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Affective Commitment	OT004	0.847	0.958	0.964	0.749
	OT005	0.842			
	OT006	0.861			
	OT007	0.864			
	OT008	0.822			
	OT009	0.719			
	OT010	0.836			
	OT011	0.780			
	OT012	0.846			
	AC001	0.885			
	AC002	0.859			
	AC003	0.837			
	AC004	0.876			
	AC005	0.893			
	AC006	0.879			
	AC007	0.841			
Academic Performance	AC008	0.856			
	AC009	0.863			
	AP001	0.903	0.973	0.976	0.821
	AP002	0.855			
	AP003	0.901			
	AP004	0.907			
	AP005	0.898			
	AP006	0.931			
	AP007	0.904			
	AP008	0.924			
	AP009	0.927			

Notes: SRMR=0.053; NFI=0.816

Table 3. **Discriminative Validity: Fornell and Larcker criteria**

Construct	AC	AP	IL	OT
AC	0.866			
AP	0.772	0.906		
IL	0.823	0.736	0.921	
OT	0.772	0.720	0.835	0.841

Next, to address common method bias, we used the full collinearity variance inflation factor (VIF) technique to investigate potential common method bias. The findings show that all VIF values are below the suggested cutoff of 3.3, indicating that common method bias is not expected to jeopardize the study's validity seriously. Because common method variance has little effect on the observed connections among the constructs, they can be evaluated with confidence.

Table 4. Common method bias using full collinearity VIF

Common Method Bias			
Item	VIF Value	Item	VIF Value
IL001	1.600	AC002	2.415
IL002	1.874	AC003	2.017
IL003	2.343	AC004	2.562
IL004	1.313	AC005	1.215
OT001	2.130	AC006	2.837
OT002	2.433	AC007	2.966
OT003	1.672	AC008	2.438
OT004	2.345	AC009	2.299
OT005	2.746	AP001	1.590
OT006	2.616	AP002	2.479
OT007	1.289	AP003	2.574
OT008	2.776	AP004	1.984
OT009	2.312	AP005	1.556
OT010	2.656	AP006	1.172
OT011	2.551	AP007	2.496
OT012	2.415	AP008	1.699
AC001	2.179	AP009	1.571

Furthermore, the effect size and predictive relevance are presented in Table 5 below:

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination (R^2) and Effect Size (f^2)

Analysis type	Path/Variable	Value	Interpretation
R Square	AC	0.677	67.7% variance explained
	OT	0.698	69.8% variance explained
	AP	0.642	64.2% variance explained
F Square	IL → AC	0.176	Medium effect
	IL → OT	0.093	Small Effect
	IL → AP	0.308	Medium effect
	OT → AP	0.038	Small effect

The coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates that the model explains 67.7% of the variance in affective commitment, 69.8% in organizational trust, and 64.2% in academic performance, demonstrating substantial explanatory power. The F-square (f^2) test measures effect size in regression analysis and assesses the contribution of independent variables to the structural model. The interpretation thresholds are as follows: 0.02 (small effect), 0.15 (medium effect), and >0.35 (large effect) (Hair et al., 2022). Regarding effect sizes, intellectual leadership has a medium effect on affective commitment ($f^2 = 0.176$) and academic performance ($f^2 = 0.308$), while its effect on organizational trust is small ($f^2 = 0.093$). Organizational trust also has a small effect on academic performance ($f^2 = 0.038$). Overall, the largest substantive effect in the structural model is the direct effect of intellectual leadership on academic performance.

Direct and Indirect effects

Table 3 indicates that intellectual leadership does not have a significant direct effect on academic performance ($T = 0.865$, $p = 0.388$), thus rejecting H1. In contrast, intellectual

leadership has a significant direct effect on organizational trust ($T = 21.497$, $p = 0.000$) and affective commitment ($T = 20.356$, $p = 0.000$), supporting H2 and H3. Meanwhile, organizational trust does not have a significant direct effect on academic performance ($T = 1.195$, $p = 0.233$), thus rejecting H4. Furthermore, affective commitment directly and significantly influences academic performance ($T = 3.021$, $p = 0.003$), thus supporting H5.

To examine the mediating effect of organizational trust and affective commitment on the relationship between intellectual leadership and academic performance, bootstrapping techniques were used to examine the indirect effect (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). The results, presented in Table 3, show that the indirect effect of Organizational Trust in the relationship between intellectual leadership and academic performance is not significant ($T = 1.183$, $p = 0.237$), does not mediate, and does not support H6. Furthermore, affective commitment in the relationship between intellectual leadership and academic performance is significant ($T = 2.817$, $p = 0.005$)

Table 6. **Hypotheses Testing**

Path Coefficients	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STD EV)	P Values	Result
Direct effect						
IL -> AP	0.174	0.167	0.202	0.865	0.388	Not Sig
IL -> OT	0.835	0.838	0.039	21.497	0.000	Sig.
IL -> AC	0.823	0.821	0.040	20.356	0.000	Sig.
OT -> AP	0.220	0.229	0.184	1.195	0.233	Not Sig
AC -> AP	0.459	0.462	0.152	3.021	0.003	Sig.
Indirect effects						
IL -> OT -> AP	0.184	0.192	0.155	1.183	0.237	Not Sig
IL -> AC -> AP	0.378	0.381	0.134	2.817	0.005	Sig.

Discussion

Our study aims to empirically test the role of intellectual leadership on the academic performance of lecturers at private universities in Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua, with organizational trust and affective commitment as mediating variables. Overall, the findings are theoretically significant and empirically consistent, as explained below.

The results of testing H1 indicate that intellectual leadership does not have a direct and significant effect on academic performance. This finding suggests that intellectual leadership, while important in shaping the broader academic environment, does not directly drive performance in private higher education institutions in Sorong Regency. This finding appears to contradict theoretical arguments (Macfarlane et al., 2024) that intellectual leadership substantially contributes to scientific culture and research productivity. However, a more in-depth interpretation suggests that intellectual leadership influences performance indirectly, mediated by intervening psychological variables. This aligns with the findings of Aboramadan, Dahleez, et al. (2020), which showed that leadership variables generally do not directly affect performance but operate through mechanisms of work attitudes and

motivation. Studies by Bolden et al. (2009) and Kezar & Eckel (2004) also explain that, in the higher education leadership literature, leadership's influence on performance is often indirect and mediated by psychological mechanisms, social and organizational processes, and relational structures. In academic environments characterized by high professional autonomy, faculty members may not respond directly to leadership influence unless accompanied by trust, emotional attachment, and perceived organizational support (Jung, 2022). Intellectual leadership may function more as a supporting condition than a direct driver of performance (Gao et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2023). Conceptually, this rejection of H1 can be explained by the unique characteristics of the research context: higher education institutions in non-metropolitan areas with still-developing academic infrastructures tend to have less standardized performance evaluation systems, so leadership's influence on performance operates more through psychological and emotional dimensions than through direct structural pathways.

The findings in H2 and H3 show that intellectual leadership has a positive and significant effect on organizational trust and affective commitment. These results are consistent with the theoretical proposition of Social Exchange Theory (Bierstedt & Blau, 1965), which holds that when leaders invest relational and intellectual resources in their members, reciprocal responses, such as trust and emotional attachment, will naturally follow. When an intellectual leader demonstrates epistemic competence, benevolence in scientific guidance, and consistency in academic values, faculty respond by developing higher trust in the institution as a manifestation of reciprocal relational exchange (R. C. Mayer et al., 1995). These findings align with research by Dirks & Ferrin (2002), which meta-analytically demonstrated that leader integrity and competence are the strongest predictors of subordinate trust across organizational contexts. Furthermore, Uslu's (2020) research also found that organizational resources and climate, shaped by leadership practices, contribute to intellectual productivity and trust among senior academics. These results support and extend previous research demonstrating the positive role of leadership in fostering organizational trust (K. Dahleez & Aboramadan, 2022). In higher education, particularly in institutions operating in resource-constrained regions such as Sorong, faculty rely heavily on epistemically legitimate leadership for professional validation and scholarly direction. Therefore, leaders who demonstrate authentic intellectual leadership naturally elicit strong trust from faculty members. Similarly, the influence of intellectual leadership on affective commitment can be explained through the framework of transformational theory (B. M. Bass, 2008) and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which explains that intellectual leaders who meet faculty members' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness will generate a deep emotional attachment to the institution, rather than simply formal compliance. Furthermore, our findings align with organizational behavior literature suggesting that leadership styles emphasizing values, vision, and support for individual development play a significant role in shaping employees' organizational attitudes (Avolio et al., 2000; Hoch et al., 2018). In academic environments characterized by high levels of professional autonomy, leadership influence often emerges not through direct control of work behavior, but through the formation of organizational identity and emotional attachment among faculty members (Gou & Shen, 2026). Therefore, intellectual leadership can be understood as a form of leadership that strengthens affective commitment by fostering an academic environment that supports intellectual development, scholarly collaboration, and appreciation for faculty members' academic contributions (Macfarlane, 2011). The findings of this study provide an important empirical contribution by demonstrating that intellectual leadership is also a significant determinant of faculty

members' emotional attachment to the academic institution (Alghamdi, 2024; Khairullah et al., 2025; Trinidad, 2025).

The results of the H4 test indicate that organizational trust does not have a significant direct effect on academic performance. In contrast to previous studies, such as Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2000), which found a positive relationship between trust and professional engagement, this study's findings indicate that, in this context, organizational trust does not, on its own, drive academic performance. Theoretically, this can be explained by the possibility that organizational trust, although necessary, serves as a foundational condition rather than a direct driver of performance in resource-constrained academic environments. In developing educational institutions in non-metropolitan areas, trust may act more as a prerequisite condition that facilitates motivation and emotional engagement but does not directly translate into measurable performance outcomes (Laufer et al., 2025). This relates to Edmondson's (1999) idea that trust-generated psychological safety is necessary for intellectual risk-taking. Still, without adequate motivation and emotional engagement, such psychological safety does not automatically result in high academic productivity. Empirically, our results differ from several studies reporting a positive relationship between organizational trust and performance in corporate or highly structured organizations, where trust in leaders is often associated with increased time effectiveness and individual performance (Salanova et al., 2021). However, these findings align with research in professional and knowledge-based organizations, including higher education institutions, which suggests that organizational trust does not automatically lead to increased individual performance without systemic support such as clear incentives, resource availability, and structured performance management mechanisms (Espinoza et al., 2025). In academic organizations transformed by high levels of professional autonomy, academic performance outcomes are often more influenced by institutional structure, institutional policies, and organizational support than by the quality of interpersonal relationships between leaders and organizational members (SSilaji et al., 2025). Thus, organizational trust appears to function as an enabler that creates conducive psychological conditions, rather than as a direct driver of performance in this context.

Testing H5 proved that affective commitment has a positive and significant effect on academic performance. This finding suggests that affective commitment serves as the primary motivational engine for lecturers, translating their psychological identification with the institution into tangible performance outcomes. This finding is highly consistent with meta-analytic evidence compiled by Herscovitch & Meyer (2002), which consistently found that affective commitment is the strongest predictor of various performance dimensions compared to continuance and normative commitment. Theoretically, this can be explained through the goal-setting theory of Tosi et al. (1991), where lecturers who are affectively committed to their institution tend to set higher personal performance standards, are more persistent in the face of research obstacles, and are more willing to invest discretionary effort in teaching, mentoring, and community service. In the context of higher education in Sorong, where extrinsic incentives such as salaries, facilities, and research support may be more limited than in metropolitan institutions, affective commitment becomes a crucial source of intrinsic motivation for sustaining lecturers' academic performance. This finding is consistent with the argument of Billot (2010) and Zaheer et al. (1998) that faculty members' emotional attachment to their institution is one of the most important determinants of discretionary effort in academic work, which ultimately leads to higher performance.

The results of the H6 test indicate that organizational trust does not significantly mediate the relationship between intellectual leadership and academic performance. In contrast to previous studies, such as De Jong et al. (2016) and Dirks & Ferrin (2002), which meta-analytically proved the mediating role of trust in the relationship between leadership and performance, this finding indicates that in the context of non-metropolitan higher education institutions in Eastern Indonesia, organizational trust is not sufficient to significantly mediate the influence of intellectual leadership on performance significantly. Theoretically, this can be explained by the contextual constraints of the research environment in institutions with limited academic infrastructure and resources. In such environments, trust may not fully translate into performance-enhancing behaviors because structural and systemic barriers prevent employees from translating trust into voluntary, performance-enhancing efforts. Furthermore, the rejection of H6 can also be understood within R. C. Mayer et al.'s (1995) trust model. However, intellectual leadership generates trust through the dimensions of ability, benevolence, and integrity; this trust does not appear strong enough to drive performance directly and independently without deeper emotional attachment. In other words, organizational trust in this context may act more as an antecedent of affective commitment than as an independent mediator of performance, consistent with Hunt & Morgan (1995), who argue that trust typically precedes commitment in the organizational psychological causal chain.

The most significant finding of this study is H7, namely that affective commitment significantly mediates the relationship between intellectual leadership and academic performance. This finding indicates that affective commitment is the primary psychological mechanism through which intellectual leadership translates into improved academic performance, underscoring the importance of emotional identification as a bridge between leadership quality and lecturers' outcomes. Theoretically, this finding can be explained through the integration of Social Exchange Theory Bierstedt & Blau, (1965) with the commitment motivation model Herscovitch & Meyer, (2002) which explains that when intellectual leaders invest relational and epistemic resources in the form of scientific guidance, inspiring academic vision, and appreciation for lecturers' contributions, lecturers respond by developing a deep emotional attachment to the institution; this attachment then serves as an intrinsic motivational energy that directly drives improved academic performance. These results are consistent with meta-analytic findings from J. P. Meyer et al. (2002) and a study by Floyd (2012) that found that the performance-enhancing effects of high-quality leadership operate largely through the motivational pathway of affective commitment. In the context of higher education in a non-metropolitan region like Sorong, where faculty members' professional identities are closely tied to their local institutional missions, affective commitment plays a proportionally larger role in driving performance than the more cognitive mechanisms of trust. This strengthens Macfarlane's (2013) argument that authentic intellectual leadership, by renewing faculty members' sense of scholarly purpose and professional identity, is the most powerful instrument for fostering genuine and sustained organizational commitment.

Conclusion

This study aims to empirically examine the role of intellectual leadership on the academic performance of lecturers at private universities in Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua, Indonesia, with organizational trust and affective commitment as mediating variables. The results provide strong evidence that intellectual leadership is an important determinant of

organizational trust and affective commitment among lecturers. Affective commitment serves as a key psychological mechanism that translates intellectual leadership investments into tangible, sustained academic performance. Our results collectively indicate that intellectual leadership influences academic performance through lecturers' emotional attachment to the institution, rather than solely through cognitive trust. This confirms that affective commitment is the most relevant and dominant mediator variable in the context of non-metropolitan higher education in Eastern Indonesia.

This study makes several significant theoretical contributions. First, it extends the application of Social Exchange Theory (Bierstedt & Blau, 1965) to the context of academic leadership in non-Western and non-metropolitan regions, demonstrating that social exchange mechanisms between intellectual leaders and faculty members produce asymmetric psychological responses, with affective commitment proving significantly more effective than organizational trust as a mediating pathway to performance. Second, it strengthens and extends the theoretical framework of intellectual leadership developed by Macfarlane (2011) and Bryman (2007) by providing empirical evidence from a previously unexplored context: a private higher education institution in a remote area of Southwest Papua. Third, it contributes to the literature on affective commitment in higher education by confirming its central role as a critical mediator between leadership quality and performance, in line with a meta-analysis by J. P. Meyer et al. (2002) but in a geographically and institutionally distinct context from previous studies.

From a practical perspective, our research findings are directly relevant to leaders of private universities in Sorong Regency and similar regions in Eastern Indonesia. Given that affective commitment is a key mediator between intellectual leadership and academic performance, higher education institutions need to design leadership development programs that focus beyond managerial or administrative competencies, but explicitly build leaders' capacity to be authentic, inspiring intellectual figures capable of fostering a sense of belonging and professional identity among lecturers within the institution. Scientific mentoring programs, academic discussion forums, and appreciation for lecturers' intellectual contributions are concrete practices that can strengthen affective commitment and, ultimately, drive sustained improvements in academic performance. Furthermore, institutional leaders need to understand that investments in intellectual leadership will not necessarily yield immediate, measurable short-term performance improvements; rather, their influence operates through a gradual, cumulative process of forming emotional attachments, requiring a long-term, consistent leadership development approach.

This study has limitations that must be frankly acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design limits the study's ability to draw definitive causal inferences; longitudinal studies are needed to confirm the direction and stability of relationships over time. Second, although a census approach was used, the study population was limited to two private universities in Sorong Regency, so generalizing the findings to other institutional contexts, particularly public universities, or institutions in metropolitan areas, must be done with caution. Third, all data were collected via self-report, so the potential for common-method bias cannot be completely ruled out, even though methodological procedures were implemented to minimize its impact. Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to use a longitudinal design to verify the temporal stability of the relationships found, expand the sample size to various types of institutions and geographic regions in Eastern Indonesia to increase the generalizability of the findings, and consider the addition of moderating variables

such as organizational culture, institutional resource support, or situational leadership characteristics that might moderate the relationship between intellectual leadership, affective commitment, and academic performance. Comparative research across institutions and regions would also be valuable to understand how context-specific the findings are and whether they apply more broadly to the Indonesian higher education ecosystem.

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