

A Conceptual Model Linking Teachers' Self-Leadership Skills to Teachers' Organizational Citizenship Behaviors, Teachers' Self-Efficacy as Mediator

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Abstract

The high school education phase is a key stage that plays a decisive role in the quality of talent cultivation for China's future. China is fully promoting reforms in high school education models and governance system transformations to advance the construction of an education powerhouse and promote the modernization process. Chinese high school education reform is undergoing a governance transition from bureaucratic management to teacher empowerment. In the reform process, teachers must go beyond traditional teaching responsibilities and actively implement curriculum reform innovations, student interest cultivation, and diverse school governance as organizational citizenship behaviors. However, the traditional reliance on external incentives has encountered significant challenges, primarily due to insufficient internal motivation among teachers. To address this issue, this study combines self-leadership theory with a range of organizational behavior theories to construct a conceptual framework that reveals how teachers' self-leadership skills affect teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors through teachers' self-efficacy. It provides a new perspective for explaining how teachers' internal driving forces can promote organizational citizenship behaviors, resolving the adaptation dilemma between high school education reform and Teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors, and offering suggestions for promoting Chinese high school college entrance examination reform and governance transformation and accelerating the realization of Chinese educational modernization.

Keywords

Teachers' Self-Leadership Skills, Teachers' Self-Efficacy, Teachers' Organizational Citizenship Behaviors, Conceptual Framework.

1. Introduction

With the release of the Outline of the Construction Plan for a Strong Education Nation (2024-2035), China's basic education is speeding up its transformation towards being "high-quality, innovative, and autonomous." This transformation places significant demands on Chinese high schools, particularly in the implementation of comprehensive college entrance examination reforms, the modernization of school governance, and the professional development of teachers (Yang, 2023). The new college entrance examination framework breaks down traditional disciplinary barriers between social and natural sciences, requiring teachers to shift from single-subject instruction to cross-disciplinary collaboration and personalized student guidance (Lin, 2019; Jiang, 2020). Meanwhile, establishing a new student quality assessment

system requires teachers to go beyond their traditional teaching roles and take on informal responsibilities such as school-based curriculum development, student career planning, and participation in school-wide governance. These voluntary and discretionary actions are collectively defined as Teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors (TOCB).

However, existing researches predominantly focus on how external factors affect TOCB, such as principals' transformational leadership (Saifuddin, 2020) or organizational identity (Purwanto et al., 2021); the focus overlooks a critical question: How do teachers sustain TOCB through internal motivation in the absence of external incentives or supervision? Given the considerable autonomy teachers possess in designing lesson plans and selecting teaching methods, external incentives often prove insufficient to timely and effectively influence their behaviors (Yao et al., 2022). Thus, in the current educational reform context, teacher-initiated OCB based on internal motivation is crucial for ensuring the success of educational reform and governance transformation (Knotts & Houghton, 2021). Drawing on social cognitive theory and social exchange theory, teachers' engagement in TOCB is not only influenced by their self-motivation but also closely tied to their self-efficacy. This is because teachers believe they have the capability to change their behavior (Guo, 2023; Ibus, 2021; Kunz, 2023).

Despite growing interest in the relationships among teachers' self-leadership skills (TSLs), teachers' self-efficacy (TSE), and teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors (TOCB) (Koo, 2022; Mansor et al., 2013; Munawaroh et al., 2022), researches in the context of Chinese senior high school education remain limited. In addition, due to policy and cultural differences, scholars in different countries vary in their selection of sub-dimensions for these three variables. Therefore, the relationships among teacher's self-leadership skills, teachers' self-efficacy, and teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors in Chinese education need further verification. This highlights the need for further empirical validation of the relationships among TSLs, TSE, and TOCB within the Chinese educational context. To address these gaps, this study proposes a conceptual framework to explore how self-leadership skills and self-efficacy influence organizational citizenship behaviors among Chinese senior high school teachers. By providing theoretical support and practical recommendations, this study aims to contribute to the advancement of college entrance examination reforms, school governance transformation, and the acceleration of educational modernization in China.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Teachers' Self-Leadership Skills (TSLs)

Self-leadership is the process by which individuals influence themselves to behave and perform in desired ways, involving self-guidance and self-motivation (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Rooted in several self-influence theories, including self-regulation (Kanfer, 1970; Carver & Scheier, 1981), self-control (Cautela, 1969; Mahoney & Arnkoff, 1978, 1979), and self-management (Andrasik & Heimberg, 1982; Luthans & Davis, 1979; Manz & Sims, 1980). These theories provide the framework for self-leadership skills, which is typically described as a set of behavioral and cognitive strategies. These strategies are commonly categorized into three types: Behavioral-focused strategies, Natural reward strategies, and Constructive thought strategies.

Behavioral-focused strategies involve techniques such as self-goal setting, self-observation, self-cueing, self-reward, and self-punishment to encourage effective behaviors and deter ineffective ones (Manz & Neck, 2004); Natural reward strategies aim to utilize intrinsic motivation to enhance performance (Manz & Neck, 2004); Constructive thought strategies include visualizing performance, engaging in positive self-talk, and examining personal beliefs and assumptions to align thoughts with desired behaviors (Ho & Nesbit, 2009).

Self-leadership has been effectively applied in organizational management, particularly in contexts involving knowledge workers (Goldsby et al., 2021). Knowledge workers, whose roles are characterized by high levels of professionalism, creativity, and autonomy, often engage in tasks where processes and outcomes are not easily measurable (Li, 2014; Xu, 2012; Alvesson, 2004). Drucker (1999) and Bäcklander et al. (2021) suggested that knowledge workers are expected to achieve self-leadership skills. They can better realize their development and empowerment through self-goal setting, self-reward, and self-evaluation, thereby improving corporate performance (Liu, 2016). Self-leadership theory can be applied to the management and facilitation of teachers by school administrators due to the significant autonomy inherent in the teaching profession (Warren, 2021). Therefore, based on self-leadership theory, teacher's self-leadership skills refer to teachers' skill to lead and manage themselves in educational practices. These skills encompass self-guidance and management across professional development, teaching practices, and interpersonal relationships and can be structured using the strategies outlined in self-leadership theory (Wu, 2019; Wu, 2024).

Existing studies indicate that teachers' self-leadership skills have a positive impact on both individuals and teams. Specifically, it is positively associated with teachers' self-efficacy (Bäcklander et al., 2021; Kiliç et al., 2023; Rizana, 2022), job satisfaction (Eom, 2022; Kim, 2017; Özdemir, 2020), work performance (Hattari & Ariyanto, 2023), organizational commitment (Kiliç et al., 2023; Knotts & Houghton, 2021), creativity and innovation behaviors (Omar, 2019; Rizana, 2022; Sary et al., 2023; Sesen et al., 2017), and proactivity (Costantini & Weintraub, 2022). It also promotes psychological empowerment and competence (Boonyarit, 2023). Furthermore, teachers' self-leadership skills correlate positively with organizational performance, as teachers' self-leadership skills can lead to more positive behaviors and improved organizational performance (Harun et al., 2017; Ugoani, 2021).

2.2. Teachers' Self-Efficacy (TSE)

Bandura's construction of self-efficacy has attracted researchers to understand and promote teachers' self-efficacy development (Hussain et al., 2022). According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy beliefs stem from four primary sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and emotional and physiological states. These beliefs fundamentally alter how individuals perceive their experiences and exert a profound impact on thoughts, well-being, personal accomplishment, actions, emotions, and motivations (Hussain et al., 2022). As a critical area of teacher psychology research (Mok & Moore, 2019), self-efficacy has emerged as a central variable in studies of teacher self-leadership skills (Neck & Houghton, 2006).

Teachers' self-efficacy is defined as teachers' belief in their ability to achieve expected outcomes (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). This belief plays a pivotal role in student motivation, enabling teachers to effectively support students, even those facing educational challenges (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Wang, 2023). Teachers' self-efficacy is vital for accomplishing goals and tasks and approaching instructional challenges (Hussain et al., 2022). Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that teachers' self-efficacy significantly influences educational outcomes, including teaching management, student development, academic performance, student motivation, and teachers' determination, enthusiasm, and confidence (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teachers with high self-efficacy can effectively manage student misbehavior (Kengatharan & Gnanarajan, 2023; Tilfarlioğlu & Ulusoy, 2012; Tsouloupas et al., 2013), create positive learning environments to motivate students (Mahler et al., 2018; Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012; Schiefele & Schaffner, 2015), and gain more colleague support (Hussain et al., 2022). Moreover, high self-efficacy stimulates teachers' interest in academic activities and encourages them to experiment with innovative teaching ideas and methods, ultimately better meeting the diverse needs of their students (Guskey, 1988; Hussain et al., 2022).

2.3. Teachers' Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

Teachers are at the core of the education sector, and their work behaviors and teaching quality are crucial for talent development and enhancing civic competence. Beyond fulfilling their teaching duties, teachers are expected to support school development through behaviors that extend beyond formal job requirements (Somech & Ron, 2007). Organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) are vital for the survival and growth of organizations, including schools. DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2005), who pioneered systematic research on teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors (TOCB), emphasized its significant impact on school functioning. TOCB is defined as teachers' behaviors inside and outside school that are not formally rewarded in the compensation and reward system but contribute to the overall operation of the school and student development (Wang, 2009). This definition is widely accepted in China and frequently cited in subsequent studies (Li & Wang, 2022).

The theoretical foundations of TOCB are mainly derived from social exchange theory and self-determination theory. Social exchange theory posits that organizations and members interact based on reciprocity, with members' voluntary actions gaining organizational recognition and rewards (Barghani, 2021). Teachers' engagement in TOCB is predominantly influenced by the reciprocal interaction between teachers and organizations, wherein teachers react to organizational support by undertaking additional responsibilities and, in turn, receive acknowledgment. Self-determination theory, on the other hand, emphasizes intrinsic motivation and autonomy, suggesting that TOCB arises from teachers' internal developmental needs and their sense of belonging to the organizations (Deci & Ryan, 1985). These two theories offer important theoretical support for understanding TOCB, revealing teachers' internal and external motivations for TOCB in educational settings.

TOCB is influenced by individual characteristics (e.g., psychological capital, role perception, personality), organizational characteristics (e.g., organizational support, fairness, culture), and leadership behaviors (e.g., leadership style, trust relationship) (Ahmad & Zafar, 2018; Hidayat & Patras, 2022). Prior Studies show that teachers' self-efficacy, psychological capital, and organizational support are key factors affecting TOCB (Arshad et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020). Leadership behaviors such as trust relationships and leadership style also significantly impact TOCB, with positive leadership enhancing TOCB (Chandra et al., 2020).

TOCB has positive effects on schools, teachers, and students. It can improve students' academic performance, teachers' job satisfaction, and professional efficacy and promote school culture and effectiveness (Ismail et al., 2021; Soparidah et al., 2021). Additionally, TOCB boosts overall educational quality by fostering teacher cooperation and creating a supportive atmosphere (Ozberk & Altinay, 2019). Previous researches indicate that TOCB benefits students and promotes teachers' professional growth and career happiness (Rusdiana et al., 2022). Thus, enhancing TOCB holds significant practical implications for education, as it can create a more positive work environment and improve overall educational outcomes.

2.4. Teachers' Self-Leadership Skills and Teachers' Self-Efficacy

According to self-leadership theory (Manz, 1986; Neck & Houghton, 2006), teachers need self-leadership skills to effectively manage their teaching practices and enhance their professional development through specific behavioral and cognitive strategies (Warren, 2021). Social cognitive theory delineates how cognitive, behavioral, personal, and environmental factors interact to foster self-motivation and influence behavioral motivation (Bandura, 1986). Teachers' self-leadership skills involve using specific strategies, motivation, and cognitive techniques to plan and execute particular behaviors (Kraft, 1998; Prussia et al., 1998). In addition, teachers' self-efficacy arises from the external environment, regulatory mechanisms, personal capabilities, experience, and education (Hong, 2021; Ibus, 2021).

A key objective of self-leadership strategies, particularly natural reward and thought pattern strategies, is to enhance self-efficacy before achieving higher performance levels (Neck & Houghton, 2006). When teachers employ self-leadership skills to achieve self-control, they develop a stronger conviction in their abilities, demonstrate positive teaching behaviors, and attain higher performance outcomes. As a result, teachers who exhibit self-leadership skills are more likely to possess greater self-efficacy in their teaching (Hussain et al., 2022). Empirical studies have consistently supported the positive relationship between teachers' self-leadership skills and teachers' self-efficacy (Kiliç et al., 2023; Munawaroh et al., 2022).

H1: Teachers' Self-Leadership Skills are significantly related to Teachers' Self-Efficacy.

2.5. Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Teachers' Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

Teachers with strong self-efficacy are better equipped to assess task difficulty, exhibit confidence in their abilities, learn from past experiences, and maintain stable job performance (Choong et al., 2020). Theoretically, high confidence levels in someone's ability to complete a job increase additional work-related behaviors, even if these behaviors are not formally or explicitly rewarded by the company or organization (Arifin et al., 2022). Teachers with strong self-efficacy are more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors, such as altruism, civic virtue, conscientiousness, and politeness (Anfajaya & Rahayu, 2020; Hidayat & Patras, 2022). Individuals with high self-efficacy beliefs may demonstrate more competent behaviors in terms of motivation levels and problem-solving abilities (Hussain et al., 2022). Teachers with higher expectations of success are more likely to perform extra duties beyond their formal responsibilities and show more substantial commitment to schools and the teaching profession. They are also more likely to take the initiative in planning and organizing their daily work (Choong et al., 2020).

Moreover, teachers who believe their performance are directly tied to their efforts and leads to efficiency are more likely to be self-motivated to achieve work goals. Teachers with high self-efficacy beliefs are more inclined to believe that their efforts will translate into improved performance, which in turn increases their likelihood of exhibiting TOCB (Hidayat & Patras, 2022; Munawaroh et al., 2022; Ullah et al., 2021). Furthermore, teachers with elevated self-efficacy are inclined to perceive a direct link between their actions and outcomes and are prone to demonstrating organizational citizenship behaviors (Hidayat & Patras, 2022; Munawaroh et al., 2022). These behaviors include assisting peers in resolving complex issues, introducing innovative teaching methods, and guiding new colleagues (Choong et al., 2020).

H2: Teachers' Self-Efficacy is significantly related to Teachers' Organizational Citizenship Behaviors.

2.6. Teachers' Self-leadership Skills and Teachers' Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

The relationship between teachers' self-leadership skills and teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors has recently attracted much attention in educational management. Self-leadership is an individual's process of effectively guiding and regulating their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors through self-motivation, self-management, and self-assessment mechanisms in a work environment (Harari et al., 2021). Teachers' self-leadership skills play a crucial role in enhancing intrinsic motivation and autonomy, encouraging participation in voluntary behaviors beyond formal job responsibilities, namely organizational citizenship behaviors (Zhou & Huang, 2025). Specifically, through self-leadership skills, teachers can set clear goals and motivate themselves to achieve goals without relying on external rewards (Stewart et al., 2019). This self-motivation and management enable teachers to proactively seek solutions to work challenges and actively participate in school activities, demonstrating higher levels of organizational citizenship behaviors (Afridi et al., 2022).

Social cognitive theory also provides theoretical support for this relationship by emphasizing that individuals can change their behavior and environment through self-imposed influences (Bandura, 1977). When teachers enhance their intrinsic motivation and autonomy via self-leadership skills, they are more likely to exhibit proactive and spontaneous behaviors that contribute to organizational citizenship behaviors (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Self-determination theory further posits that intrinsic motivation is a key driver of TOCB, and self-leadership skills enhance this motivation, leading to the increased demonstration of TOCB. Consequently, there is a significant and positive correlation between teachers' self-leadership skills and organizational citizenship behaviors, a conclusion consistently supported by multiple studies (Knotts & Houghton, 2021).

H3: Teachers' Self-Leadership Skills are significantly related to Teachers' Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

2.7. The Relationship Among Teacher's self-leadership skills and Teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors

Based on the triadic reciprocal causation model of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977), individual behavior is influenced by the interaction of external factors, personal factors, and the behavior itself. When individuals engage in self-motivation, the strong connection between their personal attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors leads to changes in their behavior, increasing the likelihood of performing extra-role behaviors such as organizational citizenship behaviors (Knotts et al., 2022). Teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors are crucial for school performance, especially by teachers with high levels of efficiency and dedication (Hidayat & Patras, 2022; Huda et al., 2019; Wang, 2009). Since organizational citizenship behaviors are additional roles, it is essential to explore the internal drivers of teachers, such as their willingness and confidence, to enhance these behaviors (Afridi et al., 2022). Social cognitive theory posits that enhancing self-leadership skills boosts teachers' self-efficacy and confidence in task completion. Teachers with strong self-leadership skills tend to exhibit higher levels of self-efficacy, which in turn increases the likelihood of engaging in OCB (Ibus, 2021; Kunz, 2023; Mayasari, 2023). Prior studies indicate that teachers' self-efficacy may mediate the link between self-leadership skills and organizational citizenship behaviors (Mansor et al., 2013; Munawaroh et al., 2022).

H4: Teachers' Self-Efficacy mediates the relationship between Teachers' Self-Leadership Skills and Teachers' Organizational Citizenship Behaviors.

3. Conceptual Framework

The study's theoretical foundation is built upon prior research, which has provided theoretical evidence and hypotheses on the relationships between self-leadership skills, self-efficacy, and organizational citizenship behaviors. Consequently, this study proposes a conceptual framework to illustrate the relationships among the identified variables: teachers' self-leadership skills (independent variable), teachers' self-efficacy (mediating variable), and teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors (dependent variable). The lines representing H1, H2, and H3 indicate direct relationships, while H4 signifies a mediating relationship.

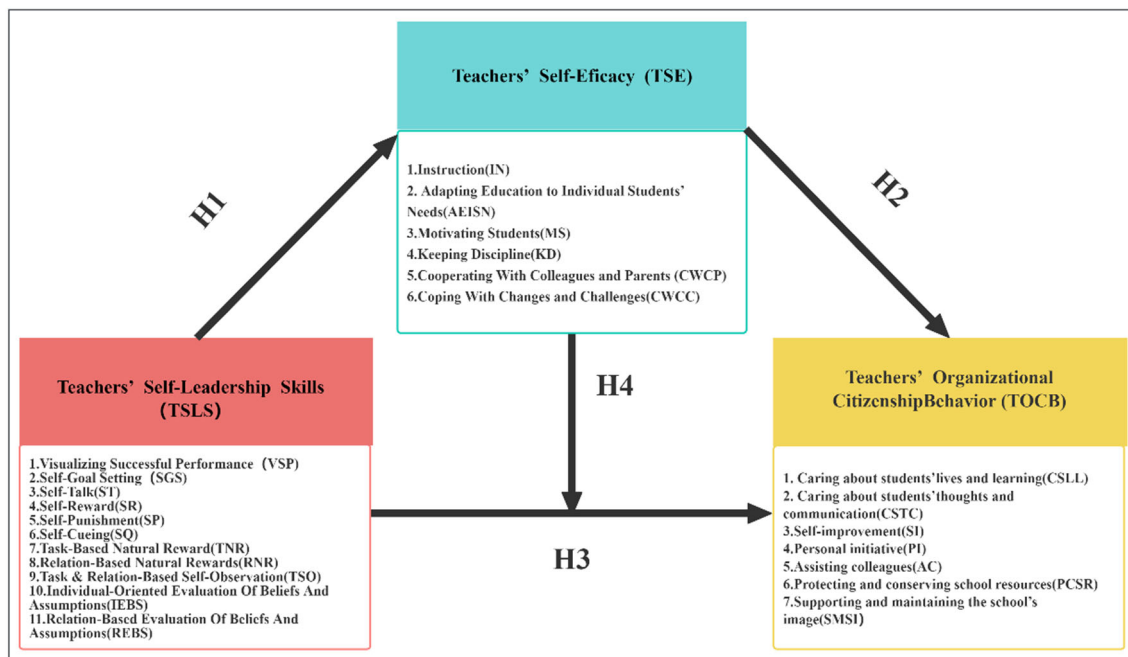


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

The model of teachers' self-leadership skills is grounded in self-leadership theory (Houghton & Neck, 2002), self-regulation theory (Williams, 1997), and social cognitive theory (Bandura & Walters, 1977). It is based on the self-leadership skills model validated by Ho and Nesbit (2009). This model comprises three strategies: behavioral focus, natural reward, and constructive thought. These strategies guide teachers in regulating their self-awareness through a series of behaviors, observations, and imaginations, forming a systematic self-leadership process. The teachers' self-leadership skills in the framework include 11 dimensions: Individual-oriented evaluation of beliefs and assumptions (IEBS), Relation-based natural rewards (RNR), Self-goal setting (SGS), Task & relation-based self-observation (TSO), Task-based natural reward (TNR), Relation-based evaluation of beliefs and assumptions (REBS), Self-punishment (SP), Self-reward (SR), Self-talk (ST), Visualizing successful performance (VSP), and Self-cueing (SC). These dimensions are primarily derived from the MSLQ (Ho & Nesbit, 2009).

Secondly, the model of teachers' self-efficacy is proposed by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) and is constructed based on social cognitive theory and social learning theory. Teachers' self-efficacy refers to teachers' belief in their ability to accomplish teaching tasks and achieve educational objectives successfully. This model emphasizes the crucial role of teachers' self-efficacy in the interaction between individuals, environments, and behaviors. For the teachers' self-efficacy model, the dimension by Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2007) was adapted to the Chinese context, covering six dimensions: Instruction (IN), Adapting Education to Individual Students' Needs (AEIN), Motivating Students (MS), Keeping Discipline (KD), Cooperating With Colleagues and Parents (CWCP), and Coping With Changes and Challenges (CWCC).

Thirdly, teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors are grounded in the model proposed by Wang (2009), which is founded on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977) and social exchange theory (Barnard, 1938). Wang (2009) defines teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors as the internal and external behaviors of teachers that are not formally rewarded in the compensation and reward system but benefit the school's overall operation and student development. The teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors model developed by Wang (2009) comprises seven dimensions: Caring about Students' Thoughts and Communication (CSTC), Personal Initiative in Assisting Colleagues (PI), Caring about Students' Lives and

Learning (CSLL), Protecting and Conserving School Resources (PCSR), Self-improvement (SI), and Supporting and Maintaining the School's Image (SMSI). This scale has been validated for reliability and validity in China's educational context (Deng, 2020; Geng, 2017).

The explanations of relationships among the three variables in this study are explained through the integration of self-leadership theory, social cognitive theory, and social learning theory. These theories collectively form the theoretical basis for understanding how teachers' self-leadership skills enhance teachers' self-efficacy, which in turn promotes organizational citizenship behaviors. This theoretical framework not only supports the proposed hypotheses but also provides a clear direction for future empirical research. This relationship is supported by theory and provides direction for empirical research.

4. Conclusion

This study presents a conceptual framework that elucidates how teachers' self-leadership skills enhance teachers' self-efficacy, which in turn boosts organizational citizenship behaviors. The framework is rooted in the Chinese educational context, and the selection of specific model dimensions for the three variables is closely linked to Chinese development environment, addressing the research gap in the Chinese high school context. This ensures that the research results can more effectively promote the organizational citizenship behaviors of Chinese high school teachers. It provides theoretical support for the next step of conducting empirical research on the relationship between Chinese high school teachers' self-leadership skills, self-efficacy, and organizational citizenship behaviors.

Theoretically, this study amalgamates self-regulation, self-leadership, self-determination, social learning, social cognitive, and social exchange theories into a comprehensive framework. It illuminates the intricate connections among teachers' self-leadership skills, self-efficacy, and organizational citizenship behaviors, thus advancing the understanding of teacher behavior drivers. This integration not only strengthens the theoretical foundations of teacher behavior research but also contributes a novel theoretical lens to the field of educational management research.

Practically, the study's findings provide clear and actionable guidance for educational administrators. School managers can design targeted training programs aimed at strengthening Teachers' self-leadership skills and self-efficacy. Moreover, providing teaching support, involving teachers in decision-making processes, and offering constructive feedback can further bolster self-efficacy. Additionally, teaching support, involving teachers in decision-making, and providing constructive feedback can further reinforce self-efficacy.

Future research could expand in several innovative and far-reaching directions. First, large-scale empirical studies using diverse methods like surveys and experiments can further validate the proposed framework. Second, exploring cross-cultural and cross-educational-stage differences can enhance the generalizability of the findings. Finally, incorporating more variables, such as teacher burnout and job satisfaction, into the analysis can yield a more comprehensive understanding of teacher behavior influences and provide richer insights for educational management practice.

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