



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Interplay between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Justice in Enhancing Job Satisfaction in Traditional Chinese Medicine Vocational Colleges in China

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the interplay between Transformational Leadership, Organizational Justice, and Educator Satisfaction within Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) vocational colleges in China. As vocational education is vital for advancing TCM practices, understanding factors that influence educators' satisfaction is essential for ensuring institutional success. The research examines how Transformational Leadership directly impacts Job Satisfaction and explores the mediating role of Organizational Justice in this relationship. Data were collected from 400 educators working in TCM vocational colleges through a structured survey instrument that measured Transformational Leadership, Organizational Justice, and Educator Satisfaction. The analysis employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the hypothesized direct and indirect relationships. The results indicate that Transformational Leadership significantly and positively influences both Organizational Justice and Educator Satisfaction. Additionally, Organizational Justice demonstrates a strong positive effect on Job Satisfaction, serving as a mediator in the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction. The mediation analysis confirms that Organizational Justice partially explains how Transformational Leadership impacts Educator Satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of fostering fairness and justice in organizational practices. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on leadership and satisfaction in vocational education by highlighting the critical roles of transformational leadership practices and organizational fairness. Practical implications include the need for leadership training programs that emphasize fairness and justice, alongside strategies to enhance educator satisfaction. These findings provide valuable insights for administrators and policymakers striving to improve the work environment and outcomes in TCM vocational education institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Elevating the quality of higher vocational education is contingent upon the calibre of the professionals and educators employed within these institutions. There is an urgent need to foster a team comprising an optimized structure, exceptional expertise, robust moral standards, and advanced capabilities in teaching, research, and management (Shankar et al., 2020). Crafting an exceptional team of professionals and educators is essential to meet the foundational requirements

of higher education. Consequently, the effective management of these educators in higher vocational colleges has emerged as a paramount concern, gaining prominence on their strategic agendas. In the current knowledge economy era, higher vocational education encounters both promising opportunities and formidable challenges, particularly for the educators within these institutions. The development of higher vocational colleges is inextricably linked to the presence of an efficient and competent team of educators (Yu & Wang, 2017). This necessity holds significant practical importance for the institutions' survival, development, and the seamless progression of their scientific research endeavours. To navigate the complexities and evolving demands in today's society, reforming and innovating the management of educators in higher vocational colleges is not only an urgent task but also a critical priority (Wang, 2022).

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) represents a profound and integral component of China's healthcare landscape, deeply rooted in centuries of cultural and medical practice (Xiaoxuan & Hu, 2023). As a holistic approach to health and wellness, TCM has maintained its significance alongside modern Western medical practices, offering a unique perspective on healing that emphasizes the balance of bodily systems and the interconnection between physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Vocational colleges play a crucial role in preserving and advancing this medical tradition, providing specialized training programs that prepare practitioners to integrate ancient healing wisdom with contemporary medical knowledge. These institutions serve as critical bridges between traditional medical practices and modern healthcare requirements, ensuring that the rich heritage of TCM continues to evolve and remain relevant in a rapidly changing medical environment (Xu et al., 2013).

However, TCM vocational colleges face substantial challenges in maintaining the delicate balance between preserving traditional knowledge and adapting to modern educational and healthcare demands. Educators must navigate complex organizational changes, technological advancements, and increasingly rigorous academic standards while simultaneously protecting the authenticity of traditional medical practices (Ijaz & Boon, 2018). The pressure to modernize curricula without compromising the philosophical and practical essence of TCM creates a complex pedagogical landscape. Additionally, these institutions must address the growing need for scientific validation of traditional treatments, integrate research methodologies, and prepare students to work effectively in a healthcare system that increasingly values evidence-based approaches. Despite these challenges, TCM vocational colleges remain committed to cultivating a new generation of practitioners who can honor traditional healing principles while meeting the evolving expectations of contemporary medical practice (Anderson et al., 2020).

Transformational leadership and organizational justice are fundamental concepts in the realm of organizational behavior, yet their interplay and impact on educator satisfaction in the context of Traditional Chinese Medicine vocational colleges in China remain understudied. This research aims to explore the dynamic relationship between these constructs and uncover insights that can enhance the overall satisfaction of educators in this specialized educational setting. Transformational leadership, as described by Bass and Avolio, is characterized by four key dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Li & Yan, 2020). This leadership approach has been shown to positively influence various organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and student performance (Li & Yan, 2020) (Nguni et al., 2006).

Organizational justice, on the other hand, refers to the perceived fairness of an organization's decision-making processes, distribution of resources, and interpersonal treatment of its members (Nguyễn & Dong, 2023). Research has demonstrated that different dimensions of organizational justice, such as distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, can significantly impact employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Nguyễn & Dong, 2023) (Brandis et al., 2015). The integration of transformational leadership and organizational justice within the context of TCM

vocational colleges in China presents a unique opportunity to explore how these factors intertwine to shape the satisfaction and well-being of educators.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research approach to examine the relationships among Transformational Leadership, Organizational Justice, and Educator Satisfaction in Traditional Chinese Medicine vocational colleges. The quantitative method was chosen to enable precise measurement and statistical analysis of these constructs, ensuring both the reliability and generalizability of the findings. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed using SmartPLS, a well-established tool in social science research, known for its effectiveness in analyzing complex relationships and providing robust insights. SEM was particularly suitable for this research as it allows simultaneous analysis of multiple dependent and independent variables while accounting for measurement errors (Sarstedt & Cheah, 2019). SmartPLS was chosen due to its capability to handle small to moderate sample sizes and its flexibility in testing mediation effects and reflective constructs (Hair et al., 2014).

The target population for this study comprised educators working in TCM vocational colleges across China. A purposive sampling method was employed to collect data from educators who were accessible and willing to participate. The final sample consisted of 400 educators, ensuring sufficient statistical power to detect significant relationships using SEM. The participants represented diverse demographic characteristics, including varying years of teaching experience, age groups, and educational qualifications, providing a comprehensive perspective on leadership and organizational justice in TCM settings.

The survey instrument consisted of well-established scales to measure the key constructs. Transformational Leadership was assessed using items related to confidence in challenges, inspiring vision, and individualized support. Organizational Justice was measured through items addressing fairness in salary, transparent promotion practices, and respectful treatment. Educator Satisfaction was evaluated using items related to recognition, manageable workload, and growth opportunities. All responses were collected using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The survey was administered online to ensure wide reach and convenience for participants. Consent procedures adhered to ethical research practices, ensuring participants were informed about the study's purpose and confidentiality measures. Data preparation involved coding responses and handling missing data to ensure clean datasets. SmartPLS was used for the analysis, including measurement model assessments for reliability and validity, as well as structural model evaluations to test path coefficients and mediation effects (Kautsarina et al., 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the contemporary business landscape, organizational survival is intrinsically linked to adaptability and strategic innovation. Drawing from scholarly research, innovation management emerges as a multifaceted discipline that enables companies to navigate complex global challenges. Göl and Bülbül (2012) propose a comprehensive framework that delineates four critical dimensions of innovation management: input management, innovation strategy, organizational culture and structure, and project management.

Input management focuses on the strategic allocation of crucial resources—human capital, financial investments, and physical infrastructure. The innovation strategy, as elaborated by Çetin et al. (2017), encompasses technology utilization, performance enhancement, and proactive problem-solving mechanisms. Organizational culture represents the foundational ecosystem that nurtures creativity, encouraging an open and collaborative environment that supports transformative thinking. Project management serves as the operational backbone, guiding the entire innovation lifecycle from initial concept selection through meticulous implementation to rigorous

evaluation (Mahmoud-Jouini et al., 2016). By integrating these dimensions, organizations can develop a robust approach to innovation that transcends traditional boundaries, enabling them to respond dynamically to emerging market opportunities and technological disruptions (Adams et al., 2006).

Transformational leadership, as conceptualized by Bass and Avolio (Li & Yan, 2020), has been widely recognized as an effective approach to positively influence various organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and student performance. The four key dimensions of transformational leadership - idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration - have been shown to foster a sense of purpose, empowerment, and innovation among followers, ultimately contributing to their overall satisfaction and engagement with the organization (Li & Yan, 2020).

In the context of TCM vocational colleges, the adoption of transformational leadership practices can play a crucial role in enhancing educator satisfaction. Transformational leaders who inspire a shared vision, stimulate intellectual growth, and provide individualized support to their faculty can help create an environment that nurtures the unique needs and aspirations of TCM educators (Sun et al., 2017). Organizational justice, on the other hand, refers to the perceived fairness of an organization's decision-making processes, distribution of resources, and interpersonal treatment of its members. Research has demonstrated that different dimensions of organizational justice, such as distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, can significantly impact employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Wang et al., 2020). Within the context of TCM vocational colleges, where the preservation of traditional knowledge and practices is paramount, ensuring a sense of fairness and transparency in organizational processes and decision-making can enhance the satisfaction and well-being of educators.

The interplay between transformational leadership and organizational justice in enhancing educator satisfaction in TCM vocational colleges represents a promising area of exploration. Transformational leaders who foster a culture of fairness, open communication, and equitable resource distribution can create an environment that nurtures the professional and personal growth of TCM educators, ultimately leading to increased job satisfaction and commitment to the institution (Bass, 2000; Ronksley-Pavia & Neumann, 2022)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the data analysis, followed by a discussion of the findings in relation to the research objectives and existing literature. The results include the measurement model evaluation, structural model analysis, and mediation analysis. Key implications and comparisons with prior studies are discussed to provide insights into the relationships among Transformational Leadership, Organizational Justice, and Educator Satisfaction.

Table 1 : Reliability and Validity Analysis for Transformational Leadership (TL) and Organizational Justice (OJ)

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
OJ	0.860	0.878	0.898	0.638
TL	0.747	0.793	0.828	1.1

Table 1 presents the Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability (rho_a and rho_c), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for the constructs of Transformational Leadership and Organizational Justice, demonstrating internal consistency, convergent validity, and overall construct reliability.

H1: Transformational Leadership positively influences Organizational Justice.

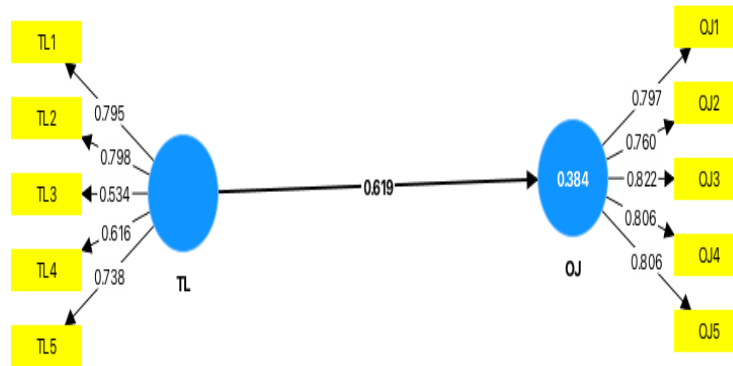


Figure 1 Structural Model Analysis for Transformational Leadership (TL) and Organizational Justice (OJ)

Figure 1 illustrates the structural model showing the relationship between Transformational Leadership (TL) and Organizational Justice (OJ). The path coefficient (**0.619**) indicates a strong positive effect of TL on OJ. The outer loadings for TL indicators (TL1 to TL5) and OJ indicators (OJ1 to OJ5) demonstrate the reliability of the respective constructs, with values above the acceptable threshold of 0.5. The R² value (**0.384**) for OJ reflects that Transformational Leadership explains 38.4% of the variance in Organizational Justice.

Table 2: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Analysis for Discriminant Validity Between Transformational Leadership (TL) and Organizational Justice (OJ)

	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)
TL <-> OJ	0.712

Table 2 provides the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) value of **0.712** for the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Justice. The HTMT value, being below the threshold of 0.85, confirms adequate discriminant validity, indicating that the two constructs are statistically distinct.

Table 3: Path Coefficient Analysis for Transformational Leadership (TL) to Organizational Justice (OJ)

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
TL -> OJ	0.619	0.623	0.022	28.624	0.000

Table 3 presents the path coefficient (**O = 0.619**) indicating a strong positive relationship between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Justice. The results demonstrate a strong positive relationship between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Justice, as indicated by the path coefficient of **0.619**. This suggests that higher levels of Transformational Leadership significantly enhance perceptions of Organizational Justice among educators. The relationship is further validated by a **t-statistic of 28.624**, which is well above the critical threshold of 1.96, and a **p-value of <0.001**, confirming that the relationship is highly statistically significant. These findings support the hypothesis that Transformational Leadership positively influences Organizational Justice, highlighting the importance of effective leadership practices in fostering fairness and justice within vocational education institutions.

H2: Transformational Leadership has a positive effect on Job Satisfaction.

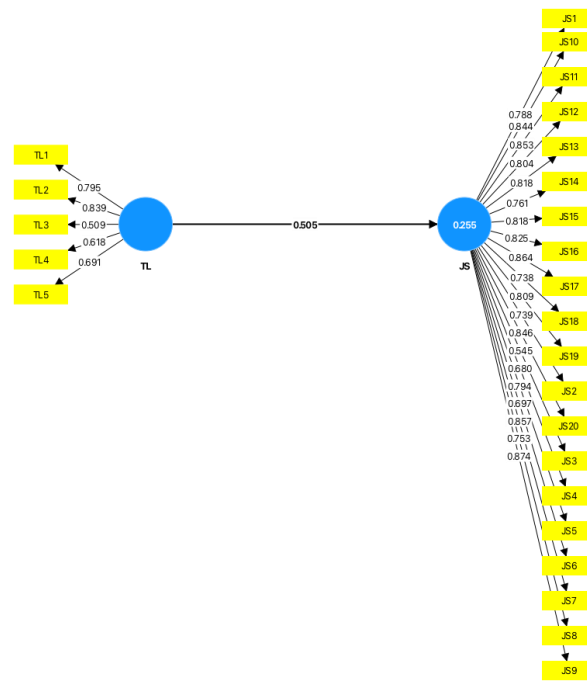


Figure 2: Structural Model Analysis for Transformational Leadership (TL) and Job Satisfaction (JS)

Figure 2 illustrates the structural model showing the relationship between Transformational Leadership (TL) and Organizational Justice (OJ). The path coefficient (**0.619**) indicates a strong positive effect of TL on OJ. The outer loadings for TL indicators (TL1 to TL5) and OJ indicators (OJ1 to OJ5) demonstrate the reliability of the respective constructs, with values above the acceptable threshold of 0.5. The R^2 value (**0.384**) for OJ reflects that Transformational Leadership explains 38.4% of the variance in Organizational Justice.

Table 4: Path Coefficient for Transformational Leadership (TL) to Job Satisfaction (JS)

	Path coefficients
TL -> JS	0.505

Table 4 presents the path coefficient of **0.505** for the relationship between **Transformational Leadership (TL)** and **Job Satisfaction (JS)** indicates a moderately strong positive relationship. This suggests that an increase in Transformational Leadership practices, such as providing a compelling vision, acting with integrity, and inspiring innovative thinking, is associated with a notable improvement in Job Satisfaction among educators. Specifically, for every one-unit increase in Transformational Leadership, there is an expected 0.505-unit increase in Job Satisfaction, assuming other factors remain constant. This relationship highlights the critical role of leadership in fostering a satisfying work environment for educators.

Furthermore, this finding underscores the practical implications for vocational colleges aiming to enhance educator satisfaction. Transformational leadership practices, such as personalized encouragement and transparent communication, can significantly influence how educators perceive their work, leading to greater satisfaction.

Table 5: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Analysis for Transformational Leadership (TL) and Job Satisfaction (JS)

	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)
TL <-> JS	0.523

Table 5 shows the **Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)** value of **0.523** between **Transformational Leadership (TL)** and **Job Satisfaction (JS)** confirms adequate discriminant validity between these constructs. With a threshold of 0.85 (or stricter thresholds of 0.90 in some cases), the value of 0.523 is well below the acceptable limit, demonstrating that Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction are distinct constructs. This indicates that the two variables do not overlap excessively and measure separate concepts in the context of your research.

This result has important implications for the credibility of your model, as it ensures that Transformational Leadership is not redundant with Job Satisfaction but functions as an independent construct. The observed relationship between these two constructs can thus be interpreted with confidence, knowing that they represent unique elements of the research framework. These findings further validate the inclusion of both constructs in the model and strengthen the overall rigor of the analysis.

Table 6: Reliability and Validity Metrics for Job Satisfaction (JS) and Transformational Leadership (TL)

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
JS	0.968	0.974	0.970	0.623
TL	0.747	0.816	0.824	0.491

The reliability and validity metrics for **Job Satisfaction (JS)** and **Transformational Leadership (TL)** in Table 6 demonstrate varying levels of construct strength. For Job Satisfaction, Cronbach's Alpha (0.968), Composite Reliability ($\rho_a = 0.974$; $\rho_c = 0.970$), and Average Variance Extracted ($AVE = 0.623$) all exceed the recommended thresholds, indicating excellent internal consistency, reliability, and convergent validity. These results suggest that the indicators for Job Satisfaction are highly cohesive and explain a substantial proportion of the variance in the construct, making it a robust measure within the model.

For Transformational Leadership, Cronbach's Alpha (0.747) and Composite Reliability ($\rho_a = 0.816$; $\rho_c = 0.824$) meet the acceptable thresholds, reflecting good internal consistency and construct reliability. However, the AVE for TL (0.491) falls slightly below the recommended threshold of 0.5, indicating weaker convergent validity. This suggests that less than 50% of the variance in the TL indicators is explained by the construct itself. This limitation may require refinement, such as reviewing and potentially removing low-loading items or revising the measurement scale to better capture the variability within the Transformational Leadership construct.

Table 7: Path Coefficient Analysis for Transformational Leadership (TL) to Job Satisfaction (JS)

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
TL - > JS	0.505	0.509	0.023	21.706	0.000

The path coefficient for **Transformational Leadership (TL) → Job Satisfaction (JS)** is **0.505**, indicating a moderately strong positive relationship between these two constructs. This means that improvements in Transformational Leadership practices, such as inspiring a shared vision, acting with integrity, and providing personalized support, lead to a significant increase in Job Satisfaction

among educators. The sample mean of **0.509**, which is closely aligned with the original sample coefficient, reflects the consistency and stability of the relationship across the bootstrapped samples. The statistical significance of this relationship is validated by a **t-statistic of 21.706**, which is well above the threshold of 1.96, and a **p-value of 0.000** (or <0.001), confirming a highly significant relationship at the 99.9% confidence level. Additionally, the low standard deviation (**0.023**) indicates a high precision in the estimated path coefficient, further supporting the reliability of this finding. These results highlight the critical role of Transformational Leadership in fostering Job Satisfaction, providing empirical evidence for its importance in enhancing educators' workplace experiences.

H3: Organizational Justice mediates the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction.

Table 8: Path Coefficient Analysis for Transformational Leadership (TL) to Job Satisfaction (JS)

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
TL -> JS	0.507	0.508	0.027	18.670	0.000

Table 8 presents the path coefficient (**O = 0.507**) for the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction. The results demonstrate a moderately strong positive effect, with a **t-statistic of 18.670** and a **p-value < 0.001** , indicating that the relationship is highly statistically significant. These findings confirm the important role of Transformational Leadership in enhancing Job Satisfaction among educators.

Table 9: Path Coefficient Analysis for Relationships Among Transformational Leadership (TL), Organizational Justice (OJ), and Job Satisfaction (JS)

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
OJ -> JS	0.847	0.845	0.021	40.160	0.000
TL -> JS	0.507	0.508	0.027	18.670	0.000
TL -> OJ	0.599	0.601	0.024	25.387	0.000

Table 9 presents the path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values for the relationships among Transformational Leadership, Organizational Justice, and Job Satisfaction. The analysis reveals significant relationships among Transformational Leadership (TL), Organizational Justice (OJ), and Job Satisfaction (JS). The path coefficient for **TL → OJ** is **0.599**, indicating a strong positive relationship where improvements in Transformational Leadership lead to higher perceptions of Organizational Justice. This relationship is statistically significant, with a t-statistic of **25.387** and a p-value of **0.000**, confirming the robustness of the finding. Similarly, **OJ → JS** exhibits an exceptionally strong positive effect, with a path coefficient of **0.847**, suggesting that Organizational Justice significantly enhances Job Satisfaction. The t-statistic for this path is **40.160**, and the p-value of **0.000** further validates the significance of this relationship. These results underscore the importance of fostering fairness and justice in organizational settings, as it has a direct and substantial impact on educators' satisfaction.

The direct relationship between **TL → JS** also demonstrates a moderately strong positive effect, with a path coefficient of **0.507**. This finding highlights that Transformational Leadership alone contributes to improved Job Satisfaction. The t-statistic for this relationship is **18.670**, and the p-

value of **0.000** confirms its significance. Together, these findings suggest that while Transformational Leadership has a direct effect on Job Satisfaction, a significant portion of its influence operates through Organizational Justice, which serves as a mediating factor. This mediation effect highlights the central role of Organizational Justice in translating leadership practices into tangible improvements in educator satisfaction. Overall, the results emphasize the dual importance of leadership and fairness in creating a supportive and satisfying work environment.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal a strong positive relationship between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Justice, as evidenced by a path coefficient of **0.619**. This finding indicates that Transformational Leadership significantly enhances perceptions of Organizational Justice among educators in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) vocational colleges. Leaders who inspire vision, provide individualized support, and act with integrity contribute to creating a sense of fairness and justice within their institutions (Xiaoxuan & Hu, 2023). The statistical significance of this relationship, supported by a **t-statistic of 28.624** and a **p-value of <0.001**, underscores the critical role of leadership in shaping organizational justice perceptions, aligning with existing research that links effective leadership with positive organizational outcomes.

The study further demonstrates the direct positive impact of Transformational Leadership on Educator Satisfaction, with a path coefficient of **0.507**. This highlights the importance of leadership practices in fostering a supportive and fulfilling work environment for educators. Leaders who exhibit transformational qualities not only enhance educators' perceptions of justice but also directly improve their job satisfaction (Çelik & Kalkan, 2022). These findings align with previous studies, which emphasize the role of transformational leadership in boosting employee satisfaction by promoting a collaborative and inspiring organizational culture. However, this study extends the understanding of this relationship by focusing on the unique context of TCM vocational colleges, where traditional values and modern educational practices intersect (Lv et al., 2022).

Additionally, the results emphasize the mediating role of Organizational Justice in the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Educator Satisfaction. The strong direct effect of Organizational Justice on Educator Satisfaction (path coefficient = **0.847**) indicates that justice serves as a crucial mechanism through which leadership practices influence satisfaction. This partial mediation highlights the dual importance of leadership and fairness in improving educator satisfaction. These findings suggest that administrators in TCM vocational colleges should prioritize leadership development programs and implement fair policies to cultivate a positive organizational environment that supports educators' well-being and institutional success. This study contributes to the broader literature on leadership and organizational justice while offering practical insights for enhancing job satisfaction in vocational education settings.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant interplay between Transformational Leadership, Organizational Justice, and Educator Satisfaction within the unique context of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) vocational colleges. The findings confirm that Transformational Leadership has a strong direct effect on both Organizational Justice and Educator Satisfaction, underscoring the importance of visionary, supportive, and ethical leadership in fostering a positive workplace culture (Meng, 2022). Furthermore, Organizational Justice plays a critical mediating role, demonstrating that fair and transparent organizational practices are essential for translating leadership qualities into enhanced educator satisfaction. These results provide valuable empirical evidence that leadership and organizational fairness are key drivers of job satisfaction, particularly in specialized educational environments like TCM vocational colleges (Jian-feng, 2019).

The implications of this study are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it contributes to the growing body of research on leadership and organizational behavior by emphasizing the mediating role of justice in leadership-satisfaction dynamics (Singhry, 2018). Practically, the findings offer actionable insights for educational administrators and policymakers. Prioritizing leadership development programs that cultivate transformational leadership qualities and implementing policies that ensure fairness and justice can significantly improve educator satisfaction (Kraft & Lyon, 2024). These initiatives not only enhance individual well-being but also support the overall effectiveness and sustainability of vocational education institutions. By addressing these critical factors, TCM vocational colleges can create a more supportive and motivating environment, ensuring the long-term success of educators and the preservation of traditional Chinese medicine education.

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