

Effect of Supportive Leadership on Job Burnout and Occupational Commitment: The Mediating Role of Intrinsic Motivation

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Abstract

Based on the job demands–resources model, self-determination theory, and social exchange theory, this study examines the influence of supportive leadership on job burnout and occupational commitment. The study also investigates the mediating role of intrinsic motivation. This study collected 221 valid questionnaires from 5 insurance companies in southern Taiwan and applied structural equation modeling using confirmatory factor analysis and bootstrapping to verify the proposed hypotheses. Extensive validation processes are also conducted to verify the fitness of the measurement model. The results confirm that supportive leadership directly affects job burnout and occupational commitment, and that intrinsic motivation significantly mediates the effect of supportive leadership on job burnout and occupational commitment. Finally, the study provides practical insights for researchers and professionals and proposes directions for future research.

Keywords: Supportive leadership, Intrinsic motivation, Job burnout, Occupational commitment, Taiwan insurance industry.

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1. Introduction

Generally, the work of insurance practitioners mainly focuses on sales promotion and customer service, requiring good communication and sales skills to understand customer needs and provide suitable solutions. The primary source of income for insurance practitioners is commissions from selling insurance products. If their sales performance is good, then their commission income will increase. However, to meet the performance requirements of the company, insurance practitioners not only need to visit existing customers but also regularly explore potential customers. Despite anticipating a high rejection rate when selling products to potential customers, insurance practitioners still need to display appropriate emotions and attitudes in front of potential customers to meet organizational requirements. Given the difficulty of obtaining insurance transactions, insurance practitioners often face high pressure, challenges, and setbacks. In the long run, insurance practitioners are prone to job burnout and high turnover (Tsai, 2019; Huang, 2012; Wu, 2016; Xie, 2012). In such circumstances, supportive leadership from sales managers, including providing emotional support and care to subordinates and timely motivation, can potentially lessen job burnout and increase occupational commitment.

House (1996, p.327) defined supportive leadership as a leader's "behavior directed toward the satisfaction of subordinates' needs and preferences, such as displaying concern for subordinates' welfare and creating a friendly and psychologically supportive work environment." Sørengaard and Langvik (2022) conducted a study on 206 police employees in Norway to explore the effects of fairness and supportive leadership on burnout and insomnia symptoms. The empirical results indicated that high levels of fairness and supportive leadership significantly reduce burnout and insomnia among police employees. Vandenberg and Scarpello (1994, p. 535) defined occupational commitment as "a person's belief in and acceptance of the values of his or her chosen occupation or line of work, and a willingness to maintain membership in that occupation." The direct effect of supportive leadership on occupational commitment has not been extensively documented in the existing literature on leadership. However, based on social exchange theory, when insurance practitioners perceive emotional support and care from supervisors, they are more likely to show high occupational commitment. On this basis, this research focuses on insurance practitioners as the study subjects and investigates the direct effects of supportive leadership on job burnout and occupational commitment among insurance practitioners.

Intrinsic motivation refers to behavior driven by internal desires (Ferneta et al., 2012). Insurance practitioners sell intangible goods, so their intrinsic motivation is particularly important when facing high sales challenges. Ryan and Deci (2000, p.56) defined intrinsic motivation as "the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated, a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards." According to the job demands–resources (JD–R) model, leadership style can be viewed as a significant job resource.

When subordinates perceive support and concern from their supervisors, they may be more intrinsically motivated to accomplish their tasks, consequently reducing job burnout. In addition, based on the reciprocity principle of social exchange theory, supportive leadership can enhance subordinates' intrinsic motivation to fulfill specific occupational roles. Subsequently, intrinsically motivated subordinates may be more inclined to remain in their current occupation and invest additional time and effort in their work. Intrinsic motivation, as a mediating mechanism between supportive leadership and job burnout and between supportive leadership and occupational commitment, has been understudied in the insurance industry context. Therefore, this study aims to explore the mediating role of intrinsic motivation in these relationships. The JD–R model, self-determination theory (SDT), and social exchange theory are used as the theoretical framework of this study to illustrate the relationship between these variables.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Supportive leadership

Kim et al. (2021) indicated that supportive leadership has been widely studied in the fields of industrial and organizational psychology, management, and public administration over the past decades. House (1996, p.327) defined supportive leadership as a leader's "behavior directed toward the satisfaction of subordinates' needs and preferences, such as displaying concern for subordinates' welfare and creating a friendly and psychologically supportive work environment." The relationship between supportive leadership and subordinates' work outcomes can be found in the current leadership literature. Shin et al. (2016) collected data from 536 employees in 69 teams of a large engineering company in Korea. Their results showed a positive correlation between employees' perceptions of supportive leadership and subsequent task performance and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Um-e-Rubbab et al. (2021) found that supportive leadership significantly influences employees' perceived physical, social, and psychological well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Khalid et al. (2012) reported that supportive leadership has garnered attention in the field of occupational stress, especially when subordinates perceive psychological or physical suffering from job tasks or interpersonal relationships. Khalid et al. (2012) conducted an empirical study, and their results indicated that supportive leadership negatively affects job stress. Similarly, Sørengaard and Langvik (2022) collected data from 206 police employees in Norway and found that highly supportive leadership is associated with lower levels of burnout.

2.2 Job burnout

Maslach et al. (2001) indicated that the term "burnout" is commonly described as a state of mental exhaustion and a response to chronic occupational stress. Maslach et al. (2001, p.397) conceptualized job burnout as "a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by the three

dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy.” According to Maslach et al. (2001), exhaustion refers to the feeling of being excessively tense and depleting emotional and physical resources. Cynicism refers to negative, callous, or overly detached reactions to various aspects of work. Inefficacy refers to a sense of inadequacy in work and a lack of achievement and productivity.

Schaufeli and Buunk (2003) claimed that exhaustion and cynicism are core symptoms of burnout. Maslach and Leiter (2005) noted that past burnout research found a close relationship between exhaustion and cynicism. Moreover, prior empirical evidence has shown that efficacy has relatively lower correlations with the other two dimensions of job burnout (Lee & Ashforth, 1996), and efficacy tends to develop independently and parallelly (Leiter, 1993). In view of the above discussions, the present study adopts exhaustion and cynicism as the primary dimensions of job burnout.

2.3 Effect of supportive leadership on job burnout

Bakker and Demerouti (2007) pointed out that each occupation has its specific job characteristics, which can be categorized into job demands and job resources. These categories can be applied to various occupational environments. This study employs the JD–R model to explain the relationship between supportive leadership and job burnout. Past research has indicated that high job demands (e.g., workload, time pressure, role conflicts, emotional demands, and stressful events) can leave employees feeling exhausted and lead to burnout and health issues (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Conversely, job resources (e.g., career opportunities, supervisor coaching, role clarity, autonomy, and social support) can weaken the association between job demands and burnout because job resources assist employees in managing job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Lesener et al., 2019).

Cohen and Wills (1985) found supervisors’ social support to have a buffering effect on subordinates’ occupational stress. Previous research based on the JD–R model has also demonstrated that leader support is an important job resource that can have a vital influence on reducing the negative effects of high job demands on employees’ well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli, 2017; Tummers & Bakker, 2021), mitigating employee burnout by lowering or buffering overall stress levels (Charoensukmongkol et al., 2016; Gibson et al., 2009). Kalliath and Beck (2001) verified that strong supervisor support reduces burnout and intentions to quit. The present study predicts that supportive leadership is an important antecedent of job burnout, and when insurance practitioners have supportive supervisors, they are more likely to be engaged and manage potential burnout effectively. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Supportive leadership negatively affects job burnout.

2.4 Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation refers to individuals' spontaneous tendency "to extend and exercise one's capacity, to explore, and to learn" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.70). More specifically, intrinsic motivation is individuals' willingness to engage in activities, deriving value and interest from the process, thereby experiencing positive emotions. Ryan and Deci (2020) advocated for SDT, emphasizing three psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy signifies individuals' ability to freely control their behavior and work. In other words, people have the freedom to choose actions based on self-determination and personal will (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Competence refers to individuals' effective task completion ability, adapting to environmental challenges, interacting efficiently with the environment, and controlling behavioral outcomes. Ryan and Deci (2020) emphasized that when the environment provides opportunities for individuals to showcase their abilities, the need for competence guides individuals to pursue challenges within their capabilities, reinforcing confidence by persisting and enhancing skills during task completion. Relatedness refers to the feeling of connection with others and the desire to establish relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). When individuals desire to form an intimate and secure relationship with others, they not only care and respect others but they also want to be cared for and respected by others (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

2.5 Mediating role of intrinsic motivation in the relationship between supportive leadership and job burnout

Xue et al. (2022) explored six leadership variables, including transformative, ethical, leader-member exchange (LMX), servant, empowering, and abusive leadership, examining data from 50 independent samples and 21,873 participants. The authors found transformational leadership, ethical leadership, LMX, servant leadership, and empowering leadership to be positively correlated with intrinsic motivation, whereas abusive supervision to be negatively associated with intrinsic motivation. Margaretha (2019) collected data from several private clinics in Jakarta, Indonesia, demonstrating intrinsic motivation to be significantly negatively related to job burnout. In addition, Bakaç et al. (2022) found that perceived intrinsic motivation significantly mediates the effect of motive incongruence on job burnout and job satisfaction.

As noted previously, SDT emphasizes that individuals have three basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2014; Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Social contexts (in this study, supportive leadership) that meet these needs increase intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Furthermore, under the JD-R model, leadership style can be considered an important job resource. When insurance practitioners perceive their supervisors to be engaging in supportive behaviors and showing concern for their needs, they may be more intrinsically motivated to perform their jobs, thereby reducing job burnout. In view of the above discussion, this study

asserts that intrinsic motivation is a significant mediating mechanism that links supportive leadership and job burnout. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 2: *Supportive leadership positively affects intrinsic motivation.*

Hypothesis 3: *Intrinsic motivation has a significant mediating effect on the negative relationship between supportive leadership and job burnout.*

2.6 Occupational commitment

Contemporary organizations are under increasing pressure to evolve due to external environmental changes and economic crises or to keep pace with technological developments (Dixon et al., 2010). Under these circumstances, organizations may not be able to provide employees with a sense of job security (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006). As a result, employees may instead shift their emotional commitment to their occupation (Carson & Bedeian, 1994; Irving et al., 1997; Laschinger et al., 2009). Meyer et al. (1993) proposed a three-component occupational commitment model, including affective (emotional attachment), continuance (costly to leave), and normative (obligation to remain) forms of commitment. In addition, Allen and Meyer (1991) demonstrated that occupational commitment is the most predictive of employees' occupational behavior.

Vandenberg and Scarpello (1994, p.535) defined occupational commitment as “a person's belief in and acceptance of the values of his or her chosen occupation or line of work, and a willingness to maintain membership in that occupation.” Lee et al. (2000, p.800) conceptualized occupational commitment “as a psychological link between a person and his or her occupation that is based on an affective reaction to that occupation.” An employee with high occupational commitment has a strong sense of identity and positive feelings toward their occupation. According to previous studies (Fu, 2011; Zhu et al., 2022), occupational commitment is a significant source of career meaning and continuity. Employees with high occupational commitment are more likely to identify with the value and purpose of their occupations, find meaning and pleasure in their work, and achieve career success. Vandenberghe and Ok (2013) asserted that occupational commitment improves employees' workplace well-being, skills development, and career engagement, and willingness to engage in career development programs.

2.7 Effect of supportive leadership on occupational commitment

Over the years, organizational researchers have utilized the concept of social exchange (Blau, 1964) to explain the motivational foundation behind positive employee behaviors and attitudes (Lin et al., 2005). Social exchange theorists have argued that employment is an effort and loyalty exchange for tangible and socioemotional benefits (Blau, 1964). Specifically, one of the basic principles of social exchange theory is that relationships evolve over time into trust, loyalty, and mutual commitments, developing into exchange rules and/or norms (Lin et al., 2005).

Exchange rules or norms serve as guidelines for the exchange process that both parties must follow (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Lin et al., 2005). Conceptually, according to social exchange theory, when employees believe that the organization is committed to them, they feel obligated to reciprocate by voluntarily contributing to the organization's benefit (Blau, 1964; Lin et al., 2005; Organ, 1990). Based on the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), prior research has indicated that employees perceiving high organizational support are more likely to reciprocate to the organization in terms of affective commitment and job-related behaviors (Lin et al., 2005; Wayne et al., 1997).

Social exchange theory posits that employees form social exchange relationships with colleagues, employers, and supervisors (Blau, 1964). When employees perceive that their needs are met by the leader, they feel obligated to meet the leader's needs, thereby resulting in more productive behavior and performance (Blau, 1964; Kuvaas et al., 2012).

Supportive leaders provide followers with personal consideration and are responsive to their individual needs, providing followers with social and emotional support (House, 1981; Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). Supportive leadership is generally manifested in behaviors such as empathy, listening, and care (House, 1981). According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), this study predicts that insurance practitioners are more likely to exhibit high levels of occupational commitment when perceiving their supervisors as supportive, caring, and empathetic, leading to the following proposed hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Supportive leadership positively affects occupational commitment.

2.8 Mediating role of intrinsic motivation in the relationship between supportive leadership and occupational commitment

Researchers focusing on SDT have determined that intrinsically motivated people remain highly engaged in work (Patall et al., 2008) because the assigned activities interest them and provide spontaneous satisfaction (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Moreover, intrinsic motivation promotes psychological engagement and mobilizes energy for sustained work-related effort, which increases the amount of time employees devote to tasks (Grant & Berry, 2011). The literature on SDT has demonstrated a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and performance and behavioral outcomes. For example, intrinsic motivation has been found to positively influence employees' job performance (Grant, 2008). Shin et al. (2019) collected survey data from 152 research and development professionals employed in a manufacturing company in South Korea. Their findings revealed that job insecurity reduces intrinsic motivation, which negatively affects job performance, OCB, and change-oriented OCB.

The relationship between intrinsic motivation and occupational commitment has not been investigated in the previous literature. Based on SDT, this study predicts that intrinsically motivated insurance practitioners are more likely to develop emotional

commitment to their occupation. Furthermore, according to the reciprocity principle of social exchange theory, this study argues that supportive leadership can enhance insurance practitioners' intrinsic motivation to perform a specific occupational role. Subsequently, intrinsically motivated insurance practitioners may be willing to remain in their current occupation and devote time and energy to their work. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 5: *Intrinsic motivation has a significant mediating effect on the positive relationship between supportive leadership and occupational commitment.*

Based on the relevant literature discussed above, this study's research model is illustrated in Figure 1.

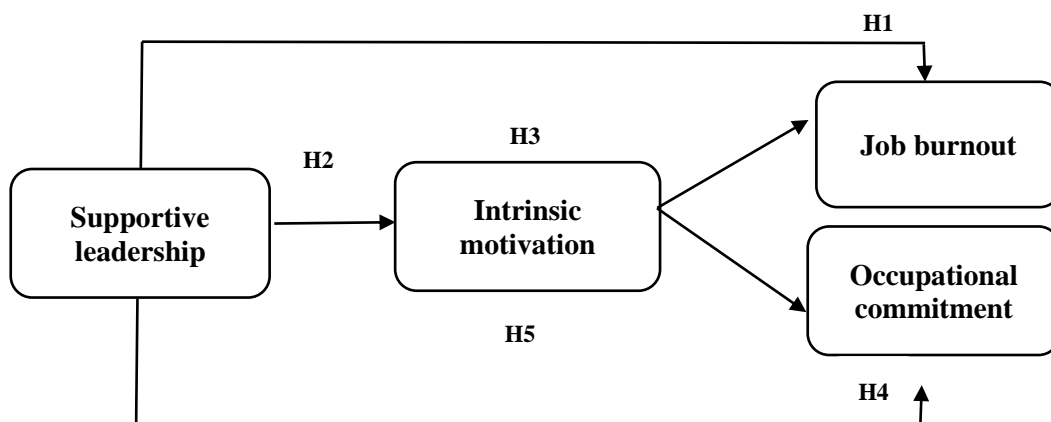


Figure 1: Research Model

3. Methods

3.1 Participants and procedures

This study investigated whether supportive leadership affects insurance practitioners' job burnout and occupational commitment and if intrinsic motivation functions as a potential mediator. This study adopted convenience sampling and invited 350 insurance practitioners from 5 insurance companies in southern Taiwan to participate in an online questionnaire survey from June 2022 to September 2022. Given that job burnout and occupational commitment are related to the individuals' cognition and psychological state regarding their work and occupation, this study adopted the self-assessment method and asked the respondents to answer all the question items.

Moreover, questionnaires completed by the same respondents could lead to common method variance (CMV), resulting in inflated correlations between independent variables (supportive leadership) and dependent variables (burnout and occupational commitment). Consequently, some of the questions in this study were reverse-designed and randomized to avoid CMV and "reduce any potential ordering effects" (Neubert et al., 2008).

A total of 342 online questionnaires were obtained. After excluding 63 incomplete questionnaires, 221 valid questionnaires were acquired, with a valid response rate of 64.62%. In terms of demographics, 45.2% had been working in the insurance field for less than 3 years, 30.3% for 6–9 years, and 24.5% for more than 10 years. Regarding education, 3.2% of the respondents graduated from high school/vocational high school, 5% graduated from junior college, and 91.8% had college degrees or above. In terms of gender, 49.3% were female, and 50.7% were male.

3.2 Measures

Other than the demographic variables, all measures used Likert-type response options ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Items in the scales were averaged to obtain the overall mean for each variable. Higher values indicate greater variable strength.

Notably, all measures were reworded to fit Taiwan's insurance context. Three insurance managers and a scholar specializing in organizational behavior were invited to examine the suitability of the measurement items. Furthermore, the data for this study were collected in Taiwan; thus, all the measures were translated from English to Chinese and back translated into English to ensure equivalence of meaning (Brislin, 1980).

Supportive leadership was measured using a three-item scale developed by Rafferty and Griffin (2006). Sample items included "My supervisor considers my personal feelings when implementing actions that will affect me" and "My supervisor takes into account my personal needs." The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.944.

Intrinsic motivation was measured with a six-item scale developed by Kuvaas and Dysvik (2009). Example items included "The tasks that I do at work are enjoyable" and "My job is so interesting that it is a motivation in itself." The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.938.

Job burnout was measured using the Maslach burnout inventory (Maslach et al., 1996). As noted previously, within the three-dimensional construct of job burnout, exhaustion, and cynicism form the core of the burnout syndrome (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003). Previous evidence shows a strong relationship between exhaustion and cynicism in a broad range of organizational and occupational settings (Maslach & Leiter, 2005); hence, this study adapted a five-item scale of exhaustion and a five-item scale of cynicism from this inventory. Example items included "I feel emotionally drained by my occupation" (exhaustion) and "I feel I treat some clients as if they were impersonal objects" (cynicism). The Cronbach's alpha for the burnout scale was 0.86.

Occupational commitment was measured using Meyer et al.'s (1993) six-item scale of affective occupational commitment. As noted, prior evidence has demonstrated that affective occupational commitment is most predictive of occupational behavior. Example items included "I am proud to work in this occupation" and "I am enthusiastic about this occupation." The Cronbach's alpha for this burnout scale was 0.844.

3.3 Analyses

3.3.1 Measurement model analysis

This study adopted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) as the measurement model for examining the relationship between supportive leadership, intrinsic motivation, job burnout, and occupational commitment. Given that the discriminant goodness-of-fit index (GFI) between model and observation data cannot rely on one single criterion, this study referenced the recommendation from Hair et al. (2010), suggesting that a proper goodness of fit should consider preliminary fit criteria, overall model fit, and fit of internal structural of model.

3.3.2 Preliminary fit criteria

In this study, all error variances of the measurement indices were positive numbers and reached the required significance level. None of the error variances exceeded the standard error. As one of the measurement indices, factor loadings were all significant, between 0.75 and 0.95. According to principles of Bagozzi and Yi (1988), the preliminary fit criteria of this study were generally good.

3.3.3 Overall model fit

On the basis of the research of Jöreskog and Sörbom (1984), Bagozzi and Yi (1988), and Hair et al. (2010), 11 indices were used to conduct the evaluation of overall model fitness, including normed chi-square, χ^2/df , GFI, adjusted GFI, standardized root mean square residual, root mean square error of approximation, normed fit index, the Tucker–Lewis index, incremental fit index, and comparative fit index. Table 1 presents the overall model fit indices for the measurement model in this study. The results confirm the overall fitness of the study's measurement model.

Table 1: Overall model fit indices for measurement model

Model Fit Indicators	χ^2/df	GFI	AGFI	SRMR	RMSEA	NFI	TLI	IFI	CFI	PCFI	PNFI
Fit Results	2.21	0.96	0.90	0.04	0.07	0.97	0.97	0.98	0.98	0.52	0.51
Cut-Off for Good Fit	1–3	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90	≤ 0.05	≤ 0.08	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90	>0.50	>0.50

Notes: χ^2/df represents normed Chi-square; GFI represents goodness of fit index; AGFI represents adjusted goodness of fit; SRMR represents standardized root mean square residual; RMSEA represents root mean square error of approximation; NFI represents normed fit index; TLI represents Tucker–Lewis index; IFI represents incremental fit index; CFI represents comparative fit index; PCFI represents parsimonious comparative fit index.

3.3.4 Fit of internal model structure

3.3.4.1 Composite reliability and convergent validity

This study adopted composite reliability (CR) and average variance explained (AVE) for examining the reliability and validity of potential variables. CFA confirmed that the factor loadings of potential variables all reached the significance level of parameters, with most of the factor loadings between 0.75 and 0.95. Table 2 shows a CR for all variables between 0.75 and 0.94, in agreement with Bagozzi and Yi's (1988) assertion that this index should be equal to or larger than 0.6. Thus, all variables had good CR, which is indicative of the high correlation between measurement and potential variables of this study. Regarding AVE, when the value of AVE increases, its related measurement error diminishes. Ideally, the value of AVE should be at least 0.5 or higher. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), an AVE smaller than 0.5 but a CR larger than 0.6 also suggests that potential variables have good convergent validity (CV). In Table 2, the AVE for all potential variables was between 0.6 and 0.86; thus, all variables exhibited good CV.

Table 2: Composite reliability and average variance explained

Variables	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Explained
Supportive Leadership	0.94	0.85
Intrinsic Motivation	0.92	0.86
Job Burnout	0.75	0.60
Occupational Commitment	0.76	0.86

3.3.4.2 Discriminant validity

If a complete correlation does not exist between two potential variables, then they are discriminable. Ping (2004) suggested that if the correlation coefficient regarding two variables is >0.7 , then the estimation method of confidence interval (CI) should be adopted to verify the discriminant validity (DV). Hancock and Nevitt (1999) suggested a minimum number of bootstrapping of 250 when estimating path coefficients. If the CI of this bootstrap regarding the correlation coefficient does not include 1 or -1 , then DV exists between potential variables (Torkzadeh et al., 2003). This study employed a bootstrap method, resampling 2,000 times to compute the bootstrap bias-corrected (BC) 95% CI of the correlation coefficient between potential variables. Table 3 lists all the correlation coefficients between potential variables and their BC 95% CI. The findings demonstrate that none of the bootstrap BC 95% CIs of the correlation coefficients of potential variables include 1 or -1 , indicating DV among potential variables.

Table 3: Potential variable correlation matrix

Potential Variables	Supportive Leadership	Intrinsic Motivation	Job Burnout	Occupational Commitment
Supportive Leadership	1			
Intrinsic Motivation	0.332** [0.184, 0.465]	1		
Job Burnout	-0.329** [-0.511, -0.127]	-0.574** [-0.748, -0.385]	1	
Occupational Commitment	0.449** [0.312, 0.569]	0.857 ** [0.776, 0.915]	-0.577** [-0.704, -0.415]	1

Notes: ** p<0.01; [,] represents BC 95% CI.

3.4 Structural model analysis

To further understand the cause and effect and the goodness of fit of the research model, this study employed the statistics software AMOS 25.0 for Windows to conduct structural equation model (SEM) analysis to examine the cause and effect of supportive leadership, intrinsic motivation, job burnout, and occupational commitment and verify the hypotheses.

3.4.1 SEM assessment

SEM can be divided into two sections. The first section refers to the measurement model, which uses CFA to examine the relationship between measurement and potential variables. The second section is a structural model, which analyzes the relationship between potential variables in theory (Hoyle & Panter, 1995). The assessment approaches of SEM and CFA are similar. After conducting SEM analysis, the results of preliminary fit criteria and fit of the internal structural model of the research model mirror the previous analysis. Moreover, this study referenced Jöreskog and Sörbom (1984), Bagozzi and Yi (1988), and Hair et al. (2010), selecting the previously introduced 11 indices to assess the overall model fit. Table 4 indicates a good overall fit of the research model. The above results validate that the SEM of this research is effective.

Table 4: Overall model fit indices for SEM

Model Fit Indicators	χ^2/df	GFI	AGFI	SRMR	RMSEA	NFI	TLI	IFI	CFI	PCFI	PNFI
Fit Results	1.57	0.97	0.93	0.03	0.05	0.97	0.98	0.99	0.98	0.52	0.52
Cut-Off for Good Fit	1–3	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90	≤ 0.05	≤ 0.08	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90	> 0.50	> 0.50

Notes: χ^2/df represents normed Chi-square; GFI represents goodness of fit index; AGFI represents adjusted goodness of fit; SRMR represents standardized root mean square residual; RMSEA represents root mean square error of approximation; NFI represents normed fit index; TLI represents Tucker–Lewis index; IFI represents incremental fit index; CFI represents comparative fit index; PCFI represents parsimonious comparative fit index; PNFI represents parsimonious normed fit index.

4. Results

4.1 Hypothesis testing

This study next conducted estimations and analyses based on the influence of overall model structure on potential variables. Table 5 presents the standardized direct, indirect, and total effects among all potential variables. The standardized direct effect between potential variables is the β value of standardized regression coefficient. The significance of this β value and its critical ratio (CR) were also analyzed. Regarding the examination of mediating effects, Preacher and Hayes (2008) suggested employing bootstrapping BC procedure to conduct the estimation of 95% CI. If it does not include 0, suggesting an intermediate effect. This study employed the bootstrap method, resampling 2,000 times to estimate the BC 95% CI of indirect effects.

As exhibited in Table 5, the path analysis of supportive leadership \rightarrow job burnout shows $\beta = -0.175$ and $CR = -2.503$, suggesting that supportive leadership has a negative effect on job burnout, supporting Hypothesis 1. The path analysis of supportive leadership \rightarrow intrinsic motivation reveals $\beta = 0.326$ and $CR = 4.562$, indicating that supportive leadership has a positive effect on intrinsic motivation, verifying Hypothesis 2. Regarding the intermediate effect, Table 5 shows that the direct effect of supportive leadership on job burnout is -0.175 . The indirect effect through the mediating variable of intrinsic motivation is $0.326 * -0.484 = -0.158$. The total effect of supportive leadership on job burnout is -0.333 , and its BC 95% CI is $[-0.511, -0.142]$, which does not include 0, confirming a mediating effect between supportive leadership and job burnout, validating Hypothesis 3. Moreover, the path analysis of supportive leadership \rightarrow occupational commitment reveals $\beta = 0.189$ and $CR = 3.90$, indicating that supportive leadership positively affects occupational commitment, supporting Hypothesis 4. In view of the intermediate effect, the direct effect of supportive leadership on occupational commitment is 0.189 , the indirect effect through the mediating variable of intrinsic motivation is $0.326 * 0.79 = 0.258$. The total effect of supportive leadership on occupational commitment is 0.447 , and its BC 95% CI is $[0.308, 0.568]$, which does not include 0, verifying a mediating effect between supportive leadership and occupational commitment, validating Hypothesis 5.

Table 5: Summary of Standardized direct, indirect, and total effects

Potential Independent Variables	Potential Dependent Variables	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
Supportive Leadership	Job Burnout	-0.175** [-0.378, -0.001]	-0.158** [-0.257, -0.079]	-0.333** [-0.511, -0.142]
Supportive Leadership	Occupational Commitment	0.189** [0.099, 0.289]	0.258** [0.146, 0.363]	0.447** [0.308, 0.568]
Supportive Leadership	Intrinsic Motivation	0.326** [0.179, 0.454]	None	0.326** [0.179, 0.454]
Intrinsic Motivation	Job Burnout	-0.484** [-0.632, -0.313]	None	-0.484** [-0.632, -0.313]
Intrinsic Motivation	Occupational Commitment	0.79** [0.707, 0.853]	None	0.79** [0.707, 0.853]

Notes: ** $p < 0.01$; Total effect = Direct effect + Indirect effect; [,] represents BC 95% CI.

5. Discussion

This study aims to examine the direct effect of supportive leadership on insurance practitioners' job burnout and occupational commitment and the mediating mechanism of intrinsic motivation. With regards to the relationship between supportive leadership and job burnout, past research based on the JD-R model has shown that leader support is an important job resource that can alleviate employee burnout by decreasing or buffering overall stress levels (Charoensukmongkol et al., 2016; Gibson et al., 2009). Kalliath and Beck (2001) also demonstrated that strong supervisor support can reduce burnout and intentions to quit. In line with the prior research mentioned above, the results of the present study also found that supportive leadership negatively affects insurance practitioners' job burnout. As indicated in the literature review, when subordinates perceive leaders as engaging in supportive behaviors, such as caring for employees' welfare and establishing a friendly and psychologically supportive work environment (House, 1996), employees' job burnout is significantly decreased.

Regarding the relationship between supportive leadership, intrinsic motivation, and job burnout, the results of this study show that supportive leadership significantly increases insurance practitioners' intrinsic motivation, which, in turn, reduces job burnout, confirming that intrinsic motivation is an important mediator. Previous research has provided similar results. Xue et al. (2022) found that transformational leadership, ethical leadership, LMX, servant leadership, and empowering leadership are positively related to intrinsic motivation. Margaretha (2019) found intrinsic motivation to be negatively related to job burnout. Bakac et al.'s (2022) findings showed that perceived intrinsic motivation plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between motivational incongruence and job burnout and between motivational incongruence and job satisfaction.

According to social exchange theory, when employees believe that their leaders are meeting their needs, they feel obligated to reciprocate, resulting in desirable behavior and performance (Blau, 1964; Kuvaas et al., 2012). The empirical results of the study support the proposition that when insurance practitioners perceive their

supervisors to be supportive, caring, and empathetic, they report high occupational commitment. Furthermore, in view of the mediating effect of intrinsic motivation, Grant et al. (2008) found intrinsic motivation to positively influence employees' job performance. Shin et al. (2019) found that job insecurity reduces intrinsic motivation, which negatively affects job performance, OCB, and change-oriented OCB. In terms of intrinsic motivation as a mediating mechanism, the study results demonstrate that supportive leadership increases insurance practitioners' occupational commitment through intrinsic motivation, thereby supporting the proposed hypotheses. Based on the reciprocity principle of social exchange theory, the present study confirms that supportive leadership can enhance insurance practitioners' intrinsic motivation to perform specific occupational roles. Subsequently, intrinsically motivated insurance practitioners will be willing to stay in their current occupation and dedicated to their work.

6. Conclusion, Implications, and Directions for Future Research

This study provides new evidence to the existing literature, showing that supportive leadership directly affects job burnout and occupational commitment, and that intrinsic motivation plays an important mediating role in these relationships. The management implication is that sales managers in the insurance industry should understand and support the needs of their subordinates and allow them to give full play to their strengths and talents, thereby enhancing their confidence and enthusiasm and creating a strong team dedicated to achieving sales goals. Furthermore, the empirical results of this study indicate that intrinsic motivation is an important mediating mechanism that can reduce job burnout while increasing occupational commitment. Therefore, insurance sales managers should hire employees with high intrinsic motivation and service enthusiasm during the recruitment process.

Regarding the generalizability of the findings, the study data were collected from five insurance companies in southern Taiwan; therefore, its findings cannot be generalized to other industries. Furthermore, the study was conducted within a certain time frame. Future research could conduct longitudinal studies examining participants' burnout over time to obtain relevant data under different stressful work conditions.

This study focuses on subordinates' job burnout and occupational commitment as psychological and attitudinal outcomes of supportive leadership in the insurance industry. Given that the relationships between psychological capital and job performance and between psychological capital and customer orientation have been documented in previous studies (Kim et al., 2015; Peterson et al., 2011), future researchers could examine the potential mediating role of psychological capital in the relationship between supportive leadership and job performance or between supportive leadership and customer orientation in the context of insurance in Taiwan.

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