

Trust in leaders and employee silence behaviour: Evidence from higher education institutions in Indonesia

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Abstract.

BACKGROUND: It is important for decision-makers such as leaders to be aware of employee silence behaviour within organizations. Failure to see this phenomenon tends to reduce the quality of information regarding potential issues in the organizations.

OBJECTIVE: This study investigated the effect of trust in leaders on employee silence behaviour and the mediating role of organizational commitment within this relationship.

METHODS: Data were collected from academicians working at private higher education institutions within an Indonesia city. Relying on the social exchange theory, the current study tested the hypotheses through the analysis of partial least square–structural equation modeling (PLS–SEM).

RESULTS: Findings confirmed that trust in leaders positively affects organizational commitment and negatively affects employee silence behaviour. Furthermore, results suggested that organizational commitment fully mediates the link between trust in leaders and employee silence behaviour.

CONCLUSIONS: These findings present a valuable contribution for scholars and managers in understanding the mechanism underlying the relationship between trust in leaders and employee silence behaviour, especially in non-profit organizational settings such as higher education institutions in Indonesia.

Keywords: Trust in leaders, organizational commitment, employee silence behaviour



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1. Introduction

Encouraging employees to inform leaders regarding a potential problem and to provide voluntary ideas, opinions, and suggestions is essential when an organization wishes to sustain and develop its performance in the global knowledge economy [1, 2]. However, when subordinates conduct silence behaviour, then an organization does not gain the complete information they need in order to correct the problem [3]. Employee silence refers to “a conscious withholding of potentially important information, suggestions, or concerns, from those who might be able to act on that information” [3] (p.548). Subordinates' behaviour that withholds ideas and opinions related to problems that occur in an organization has a very detrimental effect. Thus, employee silence behaviour should gain important attention in an organization.

To improve, develop, and maintain sustainable performance excellence, an organization needs people who are responsive to environmental challenges. An organization needs employees who wish to share valuable ideas and opinions with their leaders regarding problems in the workplace instead of withholding their ideas and opinions [4]. In reality, subordinates are always hesitant to voice their ideas and opinions and thus conduct employee silence behaviour, especially when the recipient, namely their leaders,

may consider the information as negative or a threat [1]. In this case, subordinates' trust in their leaders plays an essential role in eliminating employee silence behaviour.

Prior study has revealed that trust in leaders affected employee silence behaviour in profit organizational settings [5]. Subordinates' trust in their leaders would minimize their involvement in silence behaviour. However, studies rarely investigate the effect of trust in leaders on employee silence behaviour in non-profit organizational settings. Unlike profit organizations that pursue money as their primary focus, non-profit organizations focus on generating “some kind of social impact.” This focus causes non-profit organizations to be unique and differ in characteristics from profit organizations [6]. Thus, examining the link between trust in leaders and employee silence behaviour in non-profit organizations is necessary.

Furthermore, subordinates' commitment to the organization plays an essential role in shaping certain behaviours, both desirable such as job dedication, in-role performance, and extra-role performance [7–9], and undesirable such as deviant behaviour, reduced audit quality, and unethical behaviour [10–12]. However, the influence of organizational commitment on employee silence behaviour remains unknown at this stage. Thus, examining this relationship is necessary.

In the Indonesian context, only a few studies have discussed on individual silence behaviour, especially from a leadership perspective. For instance, Riantoputra, Maharisa, and Faridhal [13] explained violations of psychological contracts, psychological ownership based on work, voice efficacy, task cohesion, and psychological security toward silence behaviour. Although a previous study confirmed that a leader plays an essential role in shaping certain behaviours within an organization [14], the link between trust in leaders and employee silence behaviour in higher education institutions in the Southeast Asian context, especially Indonesia, remains unknown.

Indonesia has two kinds of higher education institutions, namely, private and public universities that are supervised by the Ministry of Education and Culture [15]. Although all universities are supervised by government regulations, private universities have more autonomy in managing their organizations than public universities. The main difference between these two types of higher education institutions is the source of operational funding and job placement system. For instance, operational funding

in public universities comes from the government, while in private universities, it comes from the foundations. Thus, the control system of public universities is more effective than private universities. Likewise, in public universities, the government regulates the job placement system, whereas private universities have more autonomous hiring. These distinct characteristics cause managing and developing sustainable performance at private universities in Indonesia become more challenging than public universities.

To gain and maintain higher performance, higher education institutions need to avoid employee silence behaviour. This behaviour would escalate the risk of a poor leader's decision because it would reduce the chance to gain quality information from the subordinates. In order to understand employee silence behaviour phenomena in the non-profit organizational settings, this study investigates the impact of trust in leaders on employee silence behaviour in higher education institutions, especially in the Indonesian context. Furthermore, the mediating role of organizational commitment in the mechanism underlying the above relationship is investigated.

This study poses two main questions. Can trust in leaders minimize employee silence behaviour in higher education institutions setting in the Indonesian context? If yes, can organizational commitment mediate the above relationship? Answering these two questions offers several potential contributions in the field of organization and management, especially in higher education institutions. Theoretically, this study extends the understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying the relationship between trust in leaders and employee silence behaviour. Specifically, this study proposes organizational commitment as a new mediating variable in explaining how and why trust in leaders can eliminate employee silence behaviour. Empirically, this study chooses non-profit organizations setting such as higher education institutions in Indonesian context. Previous studies focused on profit organizational settings and are rarely carried out in the Southeast Asian context, especially Indonesia. This study extends the possibility of generalizing the usefulness of trust in leaders in eliminating and reducing employee silence behaviour, which previous studies found in profit organizations. Practically, this study provides organizations and managers an overview on the importance of trust in leaders in reducing and eliminating employee silence behaviour, especially

in preventing negative behaviours that organizations deem undesirable.

2. Theoretical development and hypothesis

2.1. *Trust in leaders*

The trust in leaders' concept is essential in multi-disciplines such as management studies, social psychology, sociology, education, and organizational communication. In general, trust is defined as:

“The willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or monitor that other party [16] (p.712).”

Trust is a critical element of effective leadership that can affect subordinates' behaviour [17]. Trust in leaders is part of interpersonal trust based on the interaction between leaders and subordinates [18]. In general, trust in leaders is defined as “a psychological state involving positive expectations about the leader's intentions or behaviours with respect to oneself in situations entailing risk” [19] (p.788). Furthermore, factors of trust in leaders derive from leader's characteristics such as competence, benevolence, and reliability [16, 18].

Trust in leaders' competence refers to subordinates' trust that their leaders have the competencies such as functional/technical, interpersonal, judgment, and business sense. Subordinates would trust their leaders' competence when they believe that their leaders have the knowledge, skills, expertise regarding the work that needs to be done, and understanding how to achieve success at work. Trust in leaders' benevolence refers to subordinates' trust that their leaders serve them well, such as by helping without expecting extrinsic rewards. Subordinates would trust their leaders' benevolence when they believe that their leader cares about their welfare and problems within the organization, understand their needs and desires, and often help subordinates without expecting payback. Trust in leaders' reliability refers to subordinates' trust that their leaders would comply with a set of acceptable principles. Subordinates would trust their leaders' reliability when they believe that their leaders have a strong sense of justice, attempts to be fair when dealing with others, has integrity, maintains openness, and always keeps their promises.

2.2. *Employee silence behaviour*

Silence in organizational and management studies is divided into two phenomena [4, 5, 20–22]. First, organizational silence is a climate in which members (management, supervisors, and employees) choose to hold and hide their opinions and concerns about the problems that exist in the organization [21]. Second, individual silence is known as employee silence behaviour, which is defined as subordinates' behaviour to intentionally withhold or conceal all forms of ideas, information, opinions, or concerns that potentially benefit their organization [5, 13, 20, 22]. Subordinates who are involved in silence behaviour tend to hold and hide their ideas, information, or opinions related to problems that occur within their department/work unit and organization. Furthermore, they tend to hide their ideas or opinions related to their job and working conditions [4]. Employee silence behaviour is "an action that is conscious, active, and purposeful" [22]. For instance, a subordinate that withholds or hides his or her opinions or ideas could be a sign that he or she is protesting practices in the organization [23]. Consequently, employee silence behaviour in an organization shows the existence of a deliberate omission by the organization [22].

2.3. *Trust in leaders and employee silence behaviour*

Mayer et al. [16] proposed a model that explains the relationship between trust in leaders and their consequences. Trust is a willingness to take risks and the level of trust in leaders exert an impact on outcomes, such as certain attitudes and behaviours. Consistent with this theory, previous studies found that subordinates' trust in their leaders produce positive work behaviour such as a willingness to cooperate in a team [24], leader–member exchange [25], task performance [26], and organizational citizenship behaviour [27]. Conversely, several studies also found that subordinates' distrust in their leaders generate a negative work behaviour that is not expected by the organization, such as work stress [28], deviant behaviour [29], and counterproductive work behaviour [30].

On the basis of the model proposed by Meyer and his colleagues, Dedahanov and Rhee [5] found that trust in leaders negatively affects silence behaviour in a heavy industry in South Korea. Having subordinates with the willingness to voice their opinions on problems that exist and related to their job, problems at the

department/work unit, and organization is highly beneficial for the organization. Conversely, subordinates conducting employee silence behaviour regarding these problems will be highly detrimental to the organization [19]. Trust in leaders may play an essential role in subordinate decisions to conduct employee silence behaviour or voice their opinions [31]. Subordinates' trust of their leaders can minimize their involvement in silence behaviour. Conversely, subordinates' mistrust of their leaders would encourage them to be involved in silence behaviour. Subordinates assess the characteristics and behaviours of their leaders before they decide to conduct employee silence behaviour.

Leaders' characteristics such as reliability, competence, benevolence, and their action within an organization are several factors that trigger subordinates to believe their leaders or not [32]. For subordinates, voicing opinions about problems related to their job, at the department/work unit, and organization requires extraordinary effort because they face the risk of being opposed by their leaders. They assume that voicing their ideas and opinions about the current situation can be interpreted as a disagreement or criticism on leaders' ability in managing their work unit [33]. Subordinates assess and analyse previous examples when ideas and opinions are conveyed to the leaders. When the leaders show positive attitudes and behaviours toward these ideas, subordinates' trust in their leaders increases. Conversely, when a leader responds with negative attitudes and behaviours to these ideas, the degree of subordinates' trust in their leaders decreases. The leaders' responses to subordinates' ideas and opinions regarding a job, departments/work units, and organizational problems play a critical role in promoting subordinates' trust in their leaders. The greater the subordinates' trust toward their leaders, the more likely they may feel safe and comfortable in voicing their ideas and opinions. Conversely, when subordinates' trust in their leaders decreases, they may be more inclined to hold and hide their ideas and opinions regarding the problems within their job, department/work, and organization.

On the basis of the above discussion, the current study proposes that subordinates' distrust in their leaders may cause the emergence of employee silence behaviour. Conversely, subordinates' trust in leaders tends to reduce employee silence behaviour. Thus, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. Trust in leaders negatively affects employee silence behaviour.

2.4. Organizational commitment and employee silence behaviour

In general, organizational commitment is defined as the attachment of an employee to his/her organization [4, 34]. Subordinates who commit to their organization tend to accept organizational values. They are also proud and spend considerable effort in working for the organization. Furthermore, subordinates with strong commitment tend to have a strong desire not to leave the organization. Previous studies explain that subordinates with a strong commitment to the organization tend to exhibit desirable work behaviour such as in-role performance [9], extra-role performance [8], and job dedication [7]. Conversely, subordinates with a weak commitment to their organization tend to have undesirable work behaviours such as deviant behaviour [11], unethical behaviour [12], and reduced audit quality [10].

However, previous studies rarely investigated the impact of organizational commitment on employee silence behaviour. Yet, subordinates with strong organizational commitment tend to work harder than employees with weak organizational commitments [9, 35, 36]. Consequently, when an organization or work unit faces a problem, subordinates with a strong commitment tend to propose ideas and opinions for solutions. A high sense of belonging to an organization and the desire to always exert maximum effort in work encourage employees not to involve in silence behaviour. Similarity of personal values with the organizations will encourage subordinates to be against such actions because holding back necessary ideas and opinions will harm the organization and thereby themselves. By contrast, subordinates with a weak commitment tend to conduct employee silence behaviour when an organization or work unit faces a problem.

On the basis of the above discussion, the current study proposes that weak subordinates' commitments toward their organization tend to encourage employee silence behaviour. Conversely, strong subordinates' commitments to their organizations tend to eliminate employee silence behaviour. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. Organizational commitment negatively affects employee silence behaviour.

2.5. Trust in leaders and organizational commitment

Subordinates' trust in their leaders may encourage strong commitments to their organization [37–39].

Subordinates who believe that their leaders are willing to sacrifice personal goals in the interest of group members [40] tend to exert strong efforts when working for the organization. Social exchange is one of the main reasons why trust in leaders encourages subordinates' commitments to their organization. In social exchange theory [41], people (subordinates and leaders) in the organizations exchange their resources, which can be economic or socio-emotional [42]. For economic resources, exchanges between leaders and subordinates are limited to the terms in the employment contract. Leaders expect subordinates to fulfil job responsibilities, and in turn, employees are given compensation, benefits, and promotions. For socio-emotional resources, exchanges between leaders and subordinates are voluntary. The concern of leaders regarding subordinates' welfare and problems in the organization without expecting compensation is one such resource. Instead, subordinates pay back their leaders through strong commitments to the organization. Such an exchange of socio-emotional resources requires trust. In this case, subordinates' trust in the concern of their leaders is one of the driving factors of employees' strong commitments to the organization and optimal efforts in working [43]. Conversely, subordinates' distrust toward their leaders may tend to increase the refusal to exert optimal effort in work and have a strong desire to leave the organization [44].

On the basis of the above discussion, this study proposes that subordinates' trust in their leaders may tend to encourage their strong commitments to the organization. Conversely, subordinates' distrust in their leaders tends to weaken their commitments to the organization. Thus, the current study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. Trust in leaders positively affects organizational commitment.

2.6. Mediating role of organizational commitment

This study further proposes that organizational commitment mediates the mechanism underlying the influence of trust in leader on employee silence behaviour. This model is built on the basis that trust in leaders affects organizational commitment [38, 39] and undesirable behaviour by organizations such as employee silence behaviour [5]. Furthermore, previous studies also explain that organizational commitment plays an essential role in shaping certain

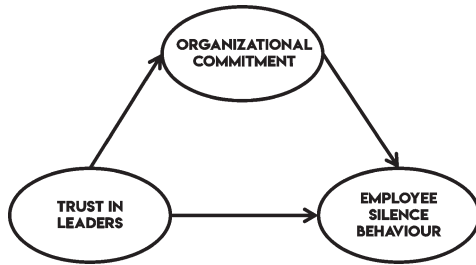


Fig. 1. Theoretical model.

behaviours that organizations deem desirable [7–9] and undesirable [10–12].

Theoretically, subordinates' trust in their leaders may shape a strong commitment to the organization, which, in the end, eliminates employee silence behaviour. From the perspective of social exchange [41, 42], resource exchange occurs between people within an organization. In this case, resource exchange also occurs between subordinates and their leaders or the organization. For subordinates, their ideas and opinions are their resources, which they provide when they feel that they also receive resources from their leaders [41]. Subordinates' trust that their leaders provide a socio-emotional resource such as support, care, and sacrifice, determines whether they would do the same to their leaders or organizations [42]. Furthermore, subordinates' trust shows that such a resource impacts how employees acquire a certain attitude and behave within the organization. Subordinates' belief that their leaders understand their needs and desires, and often help them without expecting rewards, could shape a high emotional attachment to their organization and allows them to easily accept their organizational values [38]. This acceptance of organizational values and pride then enables them to exert optimal effort when they work for the organization. Tremendous efforts at work create subordinates' concern for problems faced by work units or organizations, which in turn encourages them to suggest ideas and opinions for solutions.

On the basis of the above discussion, this study proposes that subordinates' trust in their leaders tends to encourage their strong commitments to the organization, which in turn reduces employee silence behaviour. Conversely, subordinates' distrust in their leaders tends to reduce their commitments to the organization, which in turn forms employee silence behaviour. Furthermore, the current study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4. Organizational commitment mediates the effect of trust in leaders on employee silence behaviour.

3. Research method

3.1. Sample

This study tested the hypotheses using data from survey questionnaires. A pre-test of convenience sampling was conducted among 103 non-managerial faculty members (63 males and 40 females) from four private higher education institutions in Indonesia. The formal samples included non-managerial faculty members from 11 private higher education institutions in Indonesia using convenience sampling. The questionnaire survey was formally given to 294 non-managerial faculty members through post mail. Only 209 were returned, and after detailed examination, only 206 questionnaires could be used for further analysis. From the 206 respondents (70.07%), 121 respondents were male (58.74%), and 85 respondents were female (41.26%). A total of 98 respondents served their organizations under six years (47.57%), 84 respondents served for six to ten years (40.78%), and 24 respondents served over 10 years (11.65%). Furthermore, 138 respondents worked as junior lecturers (66.99%), 60 respondents were senior lecturers (29.13%), and 8 respondents were associate professors (3.88%).

3.2. Measures

Trust in leaders in this study was measured through 15 items [18] that consisted of three dimensions, namely, trust in leaders' reliability (six items), competence (five items), and benevolence (four items). An example of these statement items is "The leader in this department communicates openly about things that are important to me," and "The leader in this department has a strong sense of justice." Alternative answer statements are measured through a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). Furthermore, the level of reliability for each dimension of measurement was above the conventional standard (α for trust in leaders' reliability = 0.915; α for trust in leaders' competence = 0.884; α for trust in leaders' benevolence = 0.886).

Organizational commitment was measured through five items [4]. Examples of these items are "I believe that university's values and my values

are similar,” and “I am proud to say that I work for this university.” Alternative answer statements were measured through a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). Furthermore, the level of reliability for this measurement was above the conventional standard ($\alpha = 0.841$).

Employee silence behaviour was measured through seven items (reverse code) developed by Vakola & Bouradas [4]. Examples are “How often do you express your disagreements to your head of department concerning your department’s issues?” and “How often do you express your disagreements to your head of department concerning your job?” Alternative answer statements were measured through a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“never”) to 5 (“always”). Furthermore, the level of reliability for this measurement was above the conventional standard ($\alpha = 0.908$).

Control variables were also considered, including demographic variables such as gender, age, organizational tenure, and education, which previous study confirmed to influence silence behaviour [13, 19, 45].

3.3. PLS analysis

The hypotheses were tested using PLS-SEM through WarpPLS 5.0 software. The analysis comprised several stages. First, this study conducted a goodness of fit (GOF) model test [46]. Second, this study analysed the measurement model by validating the variable measurement scale [47] through tests of discriminant validity, convergent validity, and reliability [48]. Third, this study considered the common method variance test to see whether the data in this study produced common method bias problems or not [49]. Finally, the current study conducted structural model analysis to test the proposed hypotheses.

4. Results

4.1. Model fit

The current study uses model fit and quality indices produced by PLS-SEM analysis, consisting of average path coefficient (APC), average R-squared (ARS), and average variance inflation factor (AVIF). For APC and ARS, p -values are recommended to be lower than 0.05, while AVIF is recommended to be smaller than 3.3 [50]. The results indicated that the APC is 0.469 ($p < 0.001$) and the ARS is 0.466

Table 1
Model fit and quality indices

Quality indices criteria	Values	Rule of thumb
Average path coefficient (APC)	0.470***	p -value < 0.05
Average R-squared (ARS)	0.468***	p -value < 0.05
Average block VIF (AVIF)	1.732	< 3.3
Tenenhous GoF (GoF)	0.574	≥ 1.00 (small effect size), ≥ 0.25 (medium effect size), ≥ 0.36 (large effect size)
Q-squared (Q^2) coefficient:		
• Organizational commitment	0.420	> 0 (acceptable predictive model)
• Employee silence behaviour	0.510	

*** $p < 0.001$.

($p < 0.001$), suggesting that the model is compatible with the data [51]. Furthermore, the AVIF (1.17) in the PLS analysis showed that the data is free from multicollinearity problems [48].

The evaluation of model fit and quality indices in PLS-SEM analysis then also calculated GOF, a global fit index that assesses the suitability of the measurement model and its structure [52]. The limits for GOF are 0.10 for the small effect size, 0.25 for the medium effect size, and 0.36 for the large effect size [53]. In this study, the results of GOF calculations (0.538) indicated that the model is compatible with large-category data.

Furthermore, evaluation of model fit and quality indices in PLS-SEM analysis also assessed predictive relevance of the model using the Stone-Geisser Q-squared (Q^2) coefficient [54]. The evaluation of Q^2 measured how well the observational value is built by the measurement and structural models. The value of Q^2 for each endogenous variable in the model must be greater than zero, which was achieved in this study and indicated that the model has an acceptable predictive value.

4.2. Measurement model analysis

The measurement model in PLS-SEM analysis was carried out by testing reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. First, reliability testing was conducted by looking at the composite reliability value (C.R.) and Cronbach’s alpha (α). In

Table 2
Measurement model analysis test

Second-order construct	First-order constructs (their loadings to second-order construct)	Indicators	Loadings	Mean	Standard deviation	AVE	C.R.	α	
Trust in leaders	Trust in leaders' reliability (0.928)	RE01	0.842	3.295	0.694	0.703	0.934	0.915	
		RE02	0.814						
		RE03	0.898						
		RE04	0.851						
		RE05	0.839						
		RE06	0.782						
	Trust in leaders' competence (0.945)	CO01	0.846	3.295	0.694	0.683	0.915	0.884	
		CO02	0.822						
		CO03	0.841						
		CO04	0.822						
		CO05	0.799						
	Trust in leaders' benevolence (0.910)	BE01	0.906	3.141	0.720	0.716	0.909	0.886	
		BE02	0.864						
		BE03	0.832						
		BE04	0.776						
	-	Organizational commitment	OC01	0.803	3.249	0.574	0.612	0.887	0.841
			OC02	0.764					
OC03			0.840						
OC04			0.752						
OC05			0.746						
-	Employee silence behaviour	ESB01	0.802	2.831	0.563	0.646	0.927	0.908	
		ESB02	0.793						
		ESB03	0.783						
		ESB04	0.800						
		ESB05	0.824						
		ESB06	0.793						
		ESB07	0.827						

PLS–SEM analysis, a variable is considered reliable if it has a C.R and α value above 0.70 [48]. The results showed that the C.R. and α values of each variable are above 0.70, which indicated that all variables of trust in leaders, organizational commitment, and employee silence behaviour have good levels of consistency and accuracy.

Second, the convergence validity test was carried out by assessing the values of loading factors and average variance extracted (AVE). For loading factor value, despite having no minimum number setting, the narrower distance between the minimum and maximum loading factor values in the measurement items in a variable indicate greater convergence in the variable [47]. Meanwhile, a variable is also judged to have convergent validity if the AVE has value above 0.50. The results indicated that the values of the loading factor of all items such as

trust in leader (0.910–0.945), organizational commitment (0.746–0.840), and employee silence behaviour (0.783–0.827) have such a narrow distance. Likewise, each variable has an AVE value above 0.50, which indicated that all items on each variable meet the assumption of convergent validity.

Finally, discriminant validity test was carried out by testing the criteria of Fornell and Larcker [55], wherein the correlation value between variables in the same column must be smaller with the square root value of AVE. Tests for discriminant validity determines whether the measuring items of a variable are highly correlated compared with other variables [47]. The results of this study indicated that the correlation value between variables is lower than the square root AVE value (Table 3). These results suggested that all variables meet the assumptions of discriminant validity.

Table 3
Correlations among first-order constructs

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Reliability (1)	0.838							
Competence (2)	0.836***	0.826						
Benevolence (3)	0.747***	0.791***	0.846					
Organizational commitment (4)	0.587***	0.600***	0.624***	0.782				
Employee Silence Behaviour (5)	0.499***	0.523***	0.497***	0.708***	0.804			
Gender (6)	0.140*	0.149*	0.025 ^{n.s.}	0.141*	0.100 ^{n.s.}	<i>n.a.</i>		
Age (7)	0.016 ^{n.s.}	0.043 ^{n.s.}	0.001 ^{n.s.}	0.052 ^{n.s.}	0.082 ^{n.s.}	0.247***	<i>n.a.</i>	
Education (8)	0.098 ^{n.s.}	0.139*	0.173*	0.007 ^{n.s.}	0.026 ^{n.s.}	0.117 ^{n.s.}	0.238***	<i>n.a.</i>
Organizational Tenure	0.006 ^{n.s.}	0.100 ^{n.s.}	0.131 ^{n.s.}	0.001 ^{n.s.}	0.061 ^{n.s.}	0.106 ^{n.s.}	0.466***	0.292***

Note: Square roots of average variances extracted (AVEs) are shown on the diagonal ***significant at 0.001; **significant at 0.01; *significant at 0.05; ^{n.s.} not significant; ^{n.a.} not available.

Table 4
Full collinearity VIFs

Reliability	Competence	Benevolence	Organizational commitment	Employee silence behaviour
2.552	2.197	2.863	2.541	2.068

4.3. Common method variance

Data variables were collected at the same time and source. The survey toward three variables in the current study such as trust in leaders (reliability, competence, and benevolence), organizational commitment, and employee silence behaviour were distributed at the same time. Furthermore, the data of each variable in this study came from the same source, specifically lecturers at universities (non-managerial). Collecting data at the same time and source can open up opportunities for producing common method bias [49]. To avoid this problem, this study follows Kock [56] and examines Full Collinearity Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs). The results showed that all values (Table 4) remain below the tolerance threshold (<3.3). Therefore, the data in this study do not have the potential for common method bias [56, 57].

4.4. Structural model analysis

Analysis of the structural model was conducted to examine the hypothesized causality relationship. Before testing the hypothesis, this study examined control variables that were not hypothesized to support the predictions in this study. Table 3 reveals that all control variables in this study such as gender ($r=0.100$, not significant [^{n.s.}]), age ($r=0.082$, ^{n.s.}),

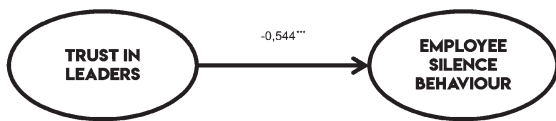
organizational tenure ($r=0.061$, ^{n.s.}), and education ($r=0.026$, ^{n.s.}) do not have significant correlation to employee silence behaviour. Furthermore, Table 5, Figs. 1 and 2 show the results of hypothesis testing. In model 1, directly (without any mediating variable organizational commitment), trust in leaders negatively influences employee silence behaviour ($\beta=-0.546$, $p<0.001$). These results indicated that the first hypothesis is supported statistically. In model 2, trust in leaders positively affects organizational commitment ($\beta=0.650$, $p<0.001$). In the model, organizational commitment also negatively influences employee silence behaviour ($\beta=-0.612$, $p<0.001$). These results indicated that the second and third hypotheses in this study are supported statistically.

This study further examined the mediating role of organizational commitment in the mechanism underlying the effect of trust in leader on employee silence behaviour. The statistical test results ($\beta=-0.398$, $p<0.001$) indicated that the fourth hypothesis in this study is supported statistically. Furthermore, to determine whether organizational commitment partially or fully mediates this mechanism, changes on path coefficients from direct effect of trust in leaders on employee silence behaviour were examined when mediating variables were incorporated into the model (Model 1) and after mediation variables were included in the model (Model 2). In Model 1, the

Table 5
Structural model analysis

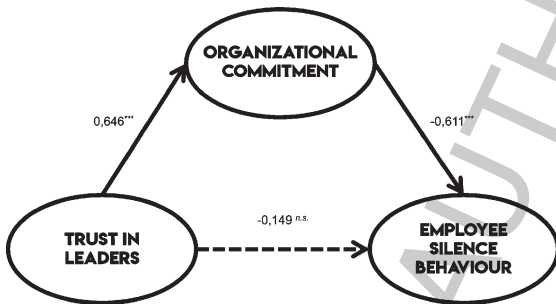
Model 1	
Relationship	Coefficient
Trust in leaders → Employee silence behaviour	-0.546***
Model 2	
Relationship	Coefficient
Trust in leaders → Employee silence behavior	-0.148 <i>n.s.</i>
Organizational commitment → Employee silence behavior	-0.612***
Trust in leaders → Organizational commitment	0.650***
Trust in leaders → Organizational commitment → Employee silence behavior	-0.398***
Total effect	
Trust in leaders → Organizational commitment → Employee silence behavior	-0.546***
R-squared	
Organizational commitment	0.423
Employee silence behavior	0.513

n.s. = not significant; *** = significant at 0.001.



n.s. = not significant. *** = significant at 0,001

Fig. 2. Structural model analysis result: Model 1.



n.s. = not significant. *** = significant at 0,001

Fig. 3. Structural model analysis result: Model 2.

direct influence coefficient value of trust in leaders toward employee silence behaviour is negative and significant ($\beta = -0.546, p < 0.001$). However, in Model 2, the path coefficient value decreases and becomes insignificant ($\beta = -0.148, n.s.$). This showed that the organizational commitment variable in this study fully mediates the mechanism underlying the influence of trust in leader on employee silence behaviour [58].

5. Discussion

This study is the first to explain the influence of trust in leaders on employee silence behaviour in higher education institutions settings in the Indonesian context. Furthermore, the current study is also the first to investigate the mediating role of organizational commitment in the mechanism underlying the influence of trust in leaders on employee silence behaviour. The results have important theoretical and practical implications.

5.1. Theoretical implications

First, subordinates' trust in their leaders tends to encourage them to voice their ideas and opinions about problems faced by work units or organizations. Conversely, subordinates' distrust in their leaders tends to encourage their employee silence behaviour (hypothesis 1). The results further confirmed the essential role of trust in leaders in reducing employee silence behaviour in non-profit organizational settings, specifically in higher education institutions. This result extends the understanding of the effect of trust in leaders on employee silence behaviour that was previously discovered by Dedahanov and Rhee [5] in the profit organizational setting, especially in heavy industry companies. Subordinates' trust in their leaders' characteristics such as reliability, competence, and benevolence encourage their decision whether to conduct employee silence behaviour or not. Subordinates assess these characteristics through

actions conducted by their leaders in responding to previously conveyed ideas and opinions [19, 33]. A positive perception regarding these actions induces a sense of safety and comfort in subordinates to voice their ideas and opinions about the problems faced by the organization. Conversely, a negative perception of these actions tends to encourage employee silence behaviour.

Second, this study extends understanding of the mechanism underlying the effect of trust in leader on employee silence behaviour. A new mediating variable, namely, organizational commitment is offered for the above relationship. Subordinates' commitments to their organization determine whether they conduct employee silence behaviour or not (hypothesis 2). The current study also found that trust in leaders tends to form a strong subordinates' commitment to the organization (hypothesis 3). Furthermore, subordinates' commitments to the organization mediate the mechanism underlying the influence of trust in leaders toward employee silence behaviour (hypothesis 4). These results extend understanding regarding the essential role of subordinates' commitments to their organization towards undesirable behaviours such as employee silence behaviour. Furthermore, the findings advance the understanding of the role of mediating organizational commitment in the mechanism underlying the effect of trust in leaders on employee silence behaviour, which previous studies have conducted separately. Trust in leaders determines subordinates' commitments to their organizations [38, 39]. Furthermore, other studies found that subordinates' commitments to their organization tend to shape behaviours that organizations deem desirable [7–9] and undesirable [10–12].

This study further confirmed the applicability of social exchange theory proposed by Blau [41] and Cropanzano and Mitchell [42] in organizational leadership studies. Trust plays a critical role in the resource exchange between a leader and subordinates. Subordinates' belief that their leaders are concerned about their problems and welfare cause a strong sense of attachment to their organization, and thus, such employees tend to exert their optimal effort when working within the organization [43]. Conversely, subordinates' distrust in their leaders tends to reduce their commitments toward the organization and cultivate a strong desire to leave. Strong subordinates' commitments to the organization is indicated with acceptance of organizational values and a strong desire to spend optimal efforts in work

prevents employee silence behaviour. Consequently, when the department/work unit and organization face problems, they voice their best ideas and opinions as solutions. Conversely, weak subordinates' commitments may withhold and hide their ideas and opinions when the department/work unit and organization face problems.

Third, despite previous studies confirming the impact of trust in leader on employee silence behaviour, similar studies in the Southeast Asian context such as Indonesia are still rare. The present results provide initial support for the use and generalization of the effect of trust in leaders in the Southeast Asian context, specifically in non-profit organizations such as private higher education institutions in Indonesia. Thus, the results confirmed that the impact of trust in leader on employee silence behaviour can be as effective in Indonesia, and perhaps in other Southeast Asian communities.

5.2. *Managerial implications*

The current study also provides valuable insights for managers, especially in private higher education institutions, in understanding the mechanism that can reduce or eliminate employee silence behaviour within organizations. The results explained that organizational commitment mediates the influence of trust in leaders on employee silence behaviour. As such, trust in leaders and organizational commitment play an essential role in eliminating employee silence behaviour. Thus, this study may provide a few directions for managers to minimize subordinates' involvement in employee silence behaviour. The findings may improve and develop the human system at private higher education institutions.

Based on the findings, several strategies can be carried out by organizations, especially in higher education institutions to prevent or reduce employee silence behaviour. First, leaders are expected to pay more attention to the development of a strategic social exchange relationship by understanding the conditions and needs of employees. Leaders' supports for subordinates build a high trust between them and encourage subordinates' payback of exerting optimal efforts when working within the organization and eventually preventing employee silence behaviour. Second, to improve interpersonal skills among leaders, training programs must be regulated by organizations, which in this case are higher education institutions. Third, leaders must always communicate the organizations' vision, mission, val-

ues, and strategies to their subordinates and possibly increase their organizational commitments.

5.3. Limitations and directions for future study

The current study has several limitations. The first potential limitation is that all variables such as trust in leaders, organizational commitment, and employee silence behaviour are measured through self-reports using the same sources (non-managerial faculty members). Thus, this research may raise concerns about the common method variance [49]. Although the statistical results showed that the data do not produce common method bias problems, further studies are recommended to collect data using different sources. Second, the number of samples in the current study is too small to generalize the results and only relies on respondents from higher education institutions in one city in Indonesia. Therefore, replication using the same model with different organizational settings such as financial services, government, and hospitals may be required. Third, the data were selected based on convenience sampling that may cause difficulties in generalizing this study to the target population. This sampling method was carried out because collecting data in Indonesia is very difficult; researchers requesting permission from organizations to disseminate surveys are commonly rejected by several organizations [10, 59]. Future studies are expected to use stratified sampling to increase the generalizability of the study data to the target population. Fourth, organizational commitment was used as a mechanism underlying the effect of trust in leaders on employee silence behaviour. Future studies may consider other mediating variables such as emotional attachment and quality relationships. Furthermore, future studies may consider the functions of human-centred leadership [60, 61] to minimize employee silence behaviour.

6. Conclusion

The current study offers important contributions on trust in leaders and negative behaviours such as employee silence. This study extends the understanding of the mechanism underlying the relationship between trust in leader and employee silence behaviour. A high trust in leaders plays an essential role in shaping a strong subordinates' commitment to the organization, which in turn prevents employee silence behaviour. The results of this study are highly

important because the need for leaders' attention is highlighted, in this case, subordinates' trusts in their leaders eliminate undesirable behaviour such as holding back ideas and opinions when problems arise in work units or organizations. The current study is expected to attract more scholarly attention to further explore the relationship of trust in leaders and employee silence behaviour that may be highly related to organizational outcomes.

Author contributions

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