

# The Effects of Organizational Cynicism on Turnover Intention: An Application on University Physical Education Teachers

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**Abstract**—This study examines the impact of organizational cynicism on the turnover intention of university physical education teachers. The research aims to understand how organizational cynicism affects the intention of educational staff to leave their jobs. Using a survey method, data was collected from 317 physical education teachers in Hainan Province, China. Partial least squares path analysis (PLS-SEM) was used in the analysis of the data collected by the survey technique. SmartPLS-4 statistical program was used to analyze the data. According to the findings of the research. The study found that affective and behavioral dimensions of organizational cynicism are significantly and positively correlated with turnover intention, while cognitive cynicism has no significant impact. The  $R^2$  value of the model shows that the turnover intention is explained by approximately 47.7%. The conclusion emphasizes the need for university administrators to take measures to reduce organizational cynicism among physical education teachers to lower turnover rates and maintain the quality of education.

**Keywords**— Organizational Cynicism; Turnover Intention; Physical Education Teachers; PLS-SEM Analysis.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Organizational cynicism, characterized by negative attitudes towards an organization, is a growing concern in the workplace environment. It typically involves beliefs that the organization is deceitful, a general feeling of distrust, and a sense of dissatisfaction with the organization's goals, actions, and values (Dean, Brandes, & Dharwadkar, 1998). While organizational cynicism has been extensively studied in the business and corporate sectors, its implications within the context of educational institutions, particularly universities, have received less attention. However, given the increasingly complex and dynamic nature of higher education, understanding how organizational cynicism affects turnover intention among educational staff is critical for sustaining a healthy, productive, and engaged workforce.

The higher education sector is facing numerous challenges such as resource constraints, shifts in policy, and increasing demands for performance and accountability, all of which contribute to negative perceptions of organizational management. Faculty members, often viewed as the backbone of the university system, are frequently exposed to these pressures, leading to job dissatisfaction and cynicism. Faculty members' cynicism can be exacerbated by perceived lack of support, inadequate reward systems, and bureaucratic

inefficiencies (Horta, H et al., 2019). In such an environment, organizational cynicism can have significant consequences, most notably on turnover intention. Turnover intention refers to an employee's self-reported likelihood of leaving their current job in the near future (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Previous studies have shown that higher levels of cynicism are strongly correlated with higher turnover intentions, potentially leading to talent loss, decreased organizational commitment, and lower overall productivity.

While organizational cynicism and turnover intention have been separately examined, few studies have specifically addressed the interaction between these variables in the context of educational institutions. Much of the existing research has focused on private sector organizations, with limited application to public sector employees such as university staff. Furthermore, studies on educational institutions often overlook the unique organizational culture and work environment inherent in academia, which may influence the dynamics between cynicism and turnover intentions. The distinctive autonomy, hierarchical structures, and complex power relations within universities require a more specialized exploration of how organizational cynicism operates in these settings (Punden, 2013).

In addition, much of the current literature has been cross-sectional, which limits the understanding of causality between organizational cynicism and turnover intentions (OO Ike, 2024). Moreover, while many studies emphasize the individual psychological outcomes of cynicism, less attention has been paid to how institutional policies, leadership, and the broader work environment influence the development of organizational cynicism in educational settings. As such, a gap remains in the literature regarding the specific antecedents and consequences of organizational cynicism for university faculty members.

The importance of this research lies in its potential to fill these gaps by providing a focused examination of organizational cynicism and turnover intention within the context of higher education. Universities face the dual challenge of maintaining high academic standards while ensuring the well-being and engagement of their faculty members. A better understanding of how organizational cynicism leads to turnover intention among university educators can help policymakers, university administrators,

and human resource professionals design targeted interventions that foster a more supportive and less cynical work environment. These interventions could include improving communication between leadership and faculty, enhancing faculty engagement, and reforming institutional policies to better align with the values and needs of educators. Furthermore, the research could also contribute to the broader field of organizational behavior by extending the application of cynicism theory beyond the private sector to the public education sector.

This study aims to contribute to the literature by focusing on the effects of organizational cynicism on turnover intention specifically in university educational settings. It will explore both the antecedents that fuel cynicism among faculty members, such as perceived organizational injustice, lack of professional development opportunities, and ineffective leadership, as well as the consequences of heightened cynicism, particularly in terms of turnover intention. Additionally, it will examine how the university environment and leadership practices moderate the relationship between organizational cynicism and turnover intention. By exploring these relationships, the research seeks to provide empirical evidence that can be used to inform university policies and practices, ultimately contributing to a more engaged, stable, and productive academic workforce.

## II. RESEARCH THEORIES AND HYPOTHESES

### A. Research theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET), first introduced by sociologist George Homans in the 1950s, remains a fundamental concept in understanding social behavior in organizations, especially in the context of employee-employer relationships. At its core, SET posits that social interactions and relationships are driven by an exchange of resources, which may be tangible (e.g., money, benefits) or intangible (e.g., trust, loyalty) (Cropanzano et al., 2017). According to SET, individuals evaluate the costs and benefits of their relationships, seeking to maximize rewards and minimize costs (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018). When the perceived rewards outweigh the costs, individuals are more likely to maintain or strengthen the relationship, while the opposite leads to a reduction in involvement or severing of ties (Emerson, 1976). In organizational settings, SET emphasizes the reciprocal nature of relationships between employees and employers, where employees contribute their time and skills, and employers offer compensation, career development opportunities, and job security (Mitchell et al., 2012). The balance of this exchange significantly influences employees' attitudes and behaviors, fostering positive outcomes like trust and commitment when perceived as fair (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018). However, when employees perceive violations or inequities in this exchange, such as breaches in trust or fairness, negative outcomes such as organizational cynicism and turnover intentions can emerge.

### B. Research Hypothesis

Organizational cynicism refers to an individual's negative disposition towards their workplace. This disposition

encompasses a range of beliefs, emotions, and behavioral inclinations. A person exhibiting organizational cynicism perceives the organization as lacking in honesty, integrity, and fairness, and believes that the decisions made are insincere. Such beliefs are often accompanied by adverse emotions, including anger and disdain. Behavioral inclinations associated with organizational cynicism may manifest as disparaging and critical remarks about the organization (Davis & Gardner, 2004). Dean et al. (1998) characterized organizational cynicism as “the individual's negative attitude towards the organization he works for” and proposed that it comprises three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Dean et al., 1998).

According to Tett and Meyer (1993), turnover intention refers to a person's wish to depart from the organization where he/she is employed. Certain academics characterize turnover intention as the choice to seek other job opportunities in different organizations (Peter and Chima 2018).

Cognitive organizational cynicism pertains to the negative perceptions and attitudes that employees develop towards their organization, often stemming from perceived violations of trust or unmet expectations. These cognitive dimensions of cynicism can profoundly influence an employee's propensity to leave the organization. When employees nurture cynical beliefs, they are more inclined to scrutinize the organization's intentions and future prospects, thereby escalating their turnover intentions. For example, research conducted by Chiaburu et al. (2019) identified cognitive cynicism as a significant predictor of turnover intention, indicating that employees who perceive their organization as untrustworthy or deceptive are more likely to pursue alternative employment opportunities. This correlation is further corroborated by findings from Quratulain and Khan (2020), which revealed that employees exhibiting elevated levels of cognitive organizational cynicism were considerably more inclined to contemplate exiting their organization, driven by their adverse perceptions and diminished trust. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Cognitive organizational cynicism is positively correlated with turnover intention.

Affective organizational cynicism encompasses the emotional reactions to perceived organizational deficiencies, characterized by sentiments of disappointment, frustration, and disdain. These adverse emotions can significantly amplify an employee's inclination to depart from the organization. Research by Bernerth et al. (2020) indicated that affective organizational cynicism, characterized by intense emotional responses to organizational failures, was closely associated with heightened turnover intentions. Employees experiencing substantial emotional cynicism are more likely to feel disengaged and alienated from their organization, which propels their intention to explore new opportunities. Similarly, Huang et al. (2019) discovered that affective organizational cynicism contributed to increased emotional exhaustion and job dissatisfaction, subsequently intensifying turnover intentions among employees. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Affective organizational cynicism is positively correlated with turnover intention.

Behavioral organizational cynicism encompasses the actions and behaviors that arise from cynical attitudes, such as diminished effort, withdrawal, and negative verbal expressions regarding the organization. These behaviors can directly influence an employee's decision to leave the organization. Balogun and Johnson (2019) emphasized that employees displaying behavioral organizational cynicism, such as reduced productivity and heightened absenteeism, were more likely to exhibit increased turnover intentions. This is attributed to the fact that such behaviors often signify a deeper disengagement from the organization and a willingness to depart. Furthermore, a study by Kim et al. (2020) confirmed that behavioral organizational cynicism was positively correlated with turnover intentions, noting that employees engaging in counterproductive work behaviors were more likely to contemplate leaving their positions due to their dissatisfaction and disengagement. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Behavioral organizational cynicism is positively correlated with turnover intention.

### III. METHOD

#### A. Data Collection Tools

In this research, the organizational cynicism scale developed by Dean was employed to evaluate organizational cynicism. This scale comprises 13 items categorized into three dimensions: cognition, affect, and behavior (Dean et al., 1998). Responses to the items are measured on a scale from 1 (indicating strong disagreement) to 5 (indicating strong agreement). A higher mean score reflects a more significant level of organizational cynicism. The questionnaire demonstrates robust reliability and validity, having been validated in a prior study (Ghahfarrokhi, 2020).

The MOAQ Intent to Quit scale (Cammann et al., 1983) is a 3 item TI scale which represents one construct within the MOAQ Attitudinal Work Module. The items are scored on a seven-point Likert Scale from 1 = strongly disagree/not at all likely to 7 = strongly agree/extremely likely. The questionnaire has good reliability and validity and has been validated in a study (Davis et.al, 2022).

#### B. Sample size

In the research, we used the survey method with closed-ended questions as the data collection method. In addition to questions about demographic information, the survey includes a total of 16 questions measuring the variables of the research. The application of the study was made on the university physical education teacher in Hainan province, China. Hainan has eight universities with a total of 317 full-time physical education teachers. Due to the relatively small population size of 317 in this study, we employed a complete coverage sampling method, surveying all 317 physical education teachers in universities in Hainan Province, China. So, Sample Size: 317. This approach ensures comprehensive and representative sampling, enhancing the reliability and validity of the study results. By surveying the entire target population,

we can more accurately reflect the overall situation of university physical education teachers in Hainan Province and provide stronger data support.

### IV. FINDINGS

#### A. Demographic Properties of Participants

TABLE 1: Demographic Properties

	Valid	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	179	56.5
	Female	138	43.5
Age	20-29 years	33	10.4
	30-39 years	99	31.2
	40-49 years	105	33.1
	50-59 years	52	16.4
	60 years and above	28	8.8
Academic title	Teaching Assistant	33	10.4
	Lecturer	185	58.4
	Associate Professor	65	20.5
	Professor	34	10.7

In examining the demographic characteristics of the teaching staff, it is observed that a significant majority, specifically 56.5%, are male, while 43.5% are female. The age distribution among the respondents indicates a broad representation across various age cohorts. Within the sample of 317 participants, 33 individuals, which equates to 10.4%, belong to the 20-29 age range. The cohort aged 30-39 consists of 99 respondents, constituting 31.2% of the overall sample. The most substantial group is comprised of individuals aged 40-49, totaling 105 participants and representing 33.1% of the total population surveyed. Furthermore, there are 52 respondents in the 50-59 age category, accounting for 16.4%, while 28 individuals, or 8.8%, are aged 60 and above. Among the 317 participants, there are 33 teaching assistants, which corresponds to 10.4% of the total sample size. The lecturer group is the largest, encompassing 185 respondents, thereby representing 58.4% of the sample. The associate professor category includes 65 individuals, making up 20.5% of the total. Additionally, there are 34 professors, which accounts for 10.7% of the overall sample. Notably, teachers aged between 46 and 55 constitute the largest segment within the age categories, while those aged 21 and older represent the highest percentage overall.

#### B. Reliability and validity

TABLE 2: Validity and Reliability Results of the Scales

Construct	Item	Loading	CA	CR	AVE
OCC	OCC 1	.888	.889	.918	.693
	OCC 2	.806			
	OCC 3	.767			
	OCC 4	.852			
	OCC 5	.843			
OCA	OCA 1	.824	.809	.875	.636
	OCA 2	.784			
	OCA 3	.759			
	OCA 4	.822			
OCB	OCB 1	.856	.863	.907	.709
	OCB 2	.826			
	OCB 3	.848			
	OCB 4	.836			
TI	TI1	.901	.862	.916	.784
	TI2	.88			
	TI3	.876			

OCC:cognitive organizational cynicism  
 OCB:behavioral organizational cynicism  
 OCA:affective organizational cynicism  
 TI:turnover intention

Initially, the assessment of the reliability and validity of the measurement scales employed in this research was undertaken. To achieve this, we meticulously evaluated several key aspects, including convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency. In terms of internal consistency reliability, we scrutinized both Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) coefficients. For the assessment of convergent validity, we utilized the average variance extracted (AVE) values, which were derived from the factor loadings. It is anticipated that both the Cronbach Alpha and the combined reliability values will exceed the threshold of 0.70, while the AVE value is expected to surpass 0.50, as established by the Leading scholars in statistics. (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2006; Hair et al., 2014; Yıldız, 2019). The results pertaining to the internal consistency and convergent validity analyses of the research variables are presented in Table 2.

To assess the internal consistency of the variables under consideration, we conducted a thorough analysis of the Cronbach Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) coefficients. The results revealed that the CA coefficients varied from 0.809 to 0.889, while the CR coefficients ranged from 0.875 to 0.918. These findings indicate that a robust level of internal consistency is upheld across the measured variables.

In the process of establishing the items to be incorporated into the factor structure, it is essential to determine benchmark values for factor loads by taking into account the sample size utilized in the study. It is generally recommended that benchmark values of 0.50 or higher be considered as acceptable (Catalano, 2018; Şencan & Fidan, 2020). In the context of this research, the factor loadings for the variables examined range from 0.759 to 0.901, while the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values fall between 0.636 and 0.784. Consequently, we can confidently assert that convergent validity is indeed established within this study.

TABLE 3: Discriminant Validity Results (AVE Criteria)

Construct	OCA	OCB	OCC	TI
OCA	<b>.798</b>			
OCB	.485	<b>.842</b>		
OCC	.456	.506	<b>.832</b>	
TI	.574	.607	.448	<b>.885</b>

In the context of Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis, the evaluation of discriminant validity is fundamentally conducted through a series of critical indicators.

Firstly, the Square Root of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) serves as a pivotal measure; it is essential that the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeds the correlations with other constructs. This condition signifies that each construct is capable of explaining its own variance effectively while simultaneously maintaining a substantial degree of distinction from other constructs within the model.

Secondly, the examination of the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) is another vital metric in this evaluation process. Ideally, the HTMT value should remain below the thresholds of 0.85 or 0.90, although these specific cutoffs may vary depending on the particular research domain. A lower HTMT value is indicative of superior discriminant validity among the constructs, reinforcing the integrity of the measurement model.

As illustrated in Table 3, the values presented in parentheses, which represent the square roots of the AVE, are indeed greater than the correlation coefficients of the other variables, thereby confirming the discriminant validity of the constructs in this analysis.

TABLE 4: Discriminant Validity Results (HTMT Criteria)

Construct	OCA	OCB	OCC	TI
OCA				
OCB	.579			
OCC	.539	.576		
TI	.686	.704	.509	

Based on the results show in table 4, where HTMT values are all below 0.9, we can conclude that the constructs demonstrate a strong level of discriminant validity. This finding reinforces the idea that each construct—such as affective organizational cynicism, behavioral organizational cynicism, cognitive organizational cynicism, turnover intention—measures its respective theoretical dimension without significant overlap with others. For instance, if the HTMT value between affective organizational cynicism and behavioral organizational cynicism is low, it implies that while both constructs might share some context, they assess different underlying characteristics.

C. Partial least squares path analysis

TABLE 5: Coefficients of the Research Model

	Beta	ST	T	P	VIF	R <sup>2</sup>	F <sup>2</sup>
OCA > TI	.339	.066	5.116	.000	1.419		.155
OCB > TI	.396	.060	6.603	.000	1.511	.477	.199
OCC > TI	.093	.056	1.674	.094	1.459		.011

According to the research conducted by Hair et al. (2014), it is essential for the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values among the examined variables to remain below the critical threshold of 5. Upon reviewing the data presented in Table5, we observe that all three VIF values are indeed below this limit, which allows us to confidently conclude that there is no linearity issue present among the variables under consideration. The analysis further reveals that both affective cynicism (  $\beta = 0.339$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and behavioral cynicism (  $\beta = 0.396$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) exert a significant influence on turnover intention, and they do so in a consistent direction and at a notably high level. Conversely, it was found that cognitive cynicism does not significantly impact turnover intention. In light of these empirical findings, we can affirm that the second and third hypotheses of the study have received support, while the first hypothesis has been rejected. That is to say, affective organizational cynicism is positively correlated with turnover intention. And, behavioral organizational cynicism is positively correlated with turnover intention. But cognitive

organizational cynicism is not positively correlated with turnover intention.

On the other hand, when we examine the  $R^2$  value of the model, it indicates that approximately 47.7% of the variance in turnover intention can be accounted for. In accordance with Cohen's (1988) guidelines, an effect size coefficient ( $f^2$ ) of 0.02 is categorized as “low,” 0.15 as “medium,” and 0.35 as “high.” Furthermore, Sarstedt et al. (2017) emphasized that it is inappropriate to assert any significant effect when the coefficient falls below the threshold of 0.02 (Yıldız, 2019). Analyzing the coefficients presented in the table, we can conclude that behavioral cynicism exhibits a medium effect size of 0.199, while affective cynicism also demonstrates a medium effect size of 0.155 in relation to turnover intention. In contrast, the  $f^2$  value for cognitive cynicism, which is 0.011, is below the 0.02 threshold, indicating that it does not exert any significant effect on turnover intention.

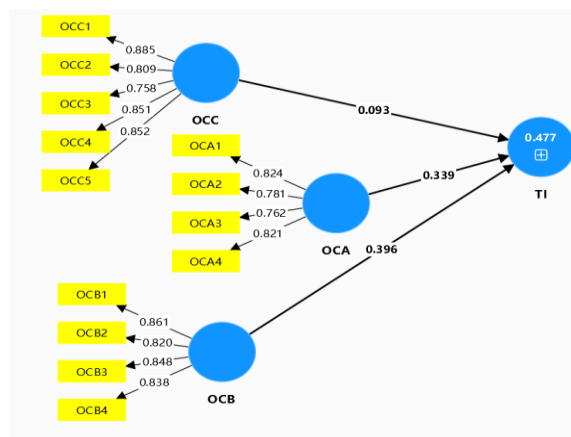


Fig. 1: The Structural Equation Model

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. Discussion and conclusion

Education is crucial in shaping individuals and societies, with universities serving as a key stage for students to enhance their academic, professional, and personal skills (Daud, 2015). As institutions that prepare future generations, universities must ensure their faculty are qualified and motivated. However, they also need to focus on retaining skilled employees, as high turnover, particularly among key academic roles, poses a significant challenge (Waclawska, I, 2018).

For university physical education teachers, the challenges are distinct. They not only teach physical skills but also encourage healthy lifestyles among students, influencing their attitudes towards fitness and sportsmanship. Yet, university physical education teachers often contend with lower salaries, insufficient institutional support for programs, and the seasonal nature of their roles. These issues, coupled with organizational challenges, can foster cynicism, negatively impacting their commitment to the institution (Güllü & Kaya, 2020).

The effects of organizational cynicism on turnover intention among physical education teachers are important to investigate, as it directly affects the quality and consistency of

physical education programs. Teachers who experience high levels of cynicism are more likely to disengage from their responsibilities, reduce their involvement in university life, and seek other employment opportunities. For example, cognitive cynicism may manifest as a belief that the university does not value the PE department, while affective cynicism might lead to frustration with the lack of professional growth opportunities. Behavioral cynicism, in turn, might drive teachers to reduce their effort or even seek employment elsewhere (Güllü & Kaya, 2020).

According to the results of the correlation analysis, there is a significant positive relationship between the affective dimensions of organizational cynicism and turnover intention. The result is same as relevant research (Cicek & Ozbilgin, 2021, Ike & Nnamchi, 2024). The findings further indicated that the behavioral aspect of organizational cynicism exhibited a positive and significant correlation with nurses' intentions to resign from their positions. This outcome aligns with previous studies (Demir & Ulutas, 2021; Ike & Nnamchi, 2024), which demonstrated that behavioral organizational cynicism is positively linked to turnover intention. That is to say, as the level of affective and behavioral organizational cynicism increases, turnover intention also rises. But in our study, cognitive organizational cynicism is not associated with turnover intention. Previous studies have reached the same conclusion as this study, suggesting that cognitive organizational cynicism cannot affect turnover intention (Çöl, G, 2022).

Furthermore, the analyses conducted revealed that the affective ( $\beta=0.487$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) and behavioral ( $\beta=0.155$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) dimensions, which are subcategories of organizational cynicism, have a significant and positive impact on turnover intention. Conversely, it was found that the cognitive dimension does not exert a significant effect ( $p>0.05$ ) on turnover intention. These findings are consistent with the results of the study by Canbek and Kanbur (2019).

The findings derived from the analysis indicate that the dimension exerting a moderate influence on turnover intention is predominantly the affective dimension of organizational cynicism. In this context, it becomes evident that university employees predominantly experience feelings of cynicism within their emotional landscape, which pertains to their internal psychological state.

The results obtained from the analysis suggest that the factor having a moderate impact on turnover intention is primarily the behavioral aspect of organizational cynicism. In this regard, it is apparent that university employees tend to exhibit behaviors such as disengagement, reduced commitment, or absenteeism, which reflect their cynical attitudes towards the organization. However, unlike the affective dimension, these behaviors may not always directly lead to turnover but rather serve as early signs of dissatisfaction, influencing the employees' decision-making process regarding whether to stay or leave.

The cognitive dimension, which embodies the perception that the organization is deficient in fairness, honesty, and integrity, did not influence turnover intention. This finding implies that employees may be responding emotionally,

believing that they are powerless to alter the injustices they encounter. In essence, it is plausible that the impacts of the cognitive dimension are intertwined with the affective dimension.

### B. Recommendation

Every university physical education teacher may decide or intend to leave their job for various reasons. One of the reasons for this is undoubtedly 'organizational cynicism'. Therefore, university administrators need to take proactive measures to prevent the formation and development of organizational cynicism among their physical education faculty. The most critical precaution to be taken is to prevent negative emotional reactions. To achieve this, the university management must create platforms where teachers can express their requests, suggestions, and complaints freely and without fear of retribution.

In today's world, regardless of the type of institution, employees—especially university physical education teachers—no longer want to remain ordinary staff members. They seek to actively participate in the management of the university and influence decisions that concern them. Teachers want to express their thoughts freely and contribute to the results of these decisions (Dinçer & Fidan, 2011). Furthermore, having an administrative representative from the teaching staff in the university's management bodies ensures that accurate information regarding the rationale and process behind managerial decisions reaches everyone in the organization. This transparency reduces the negative emotional reactions triggered by incomplete or inaccurate information, even if it cannot completely eliminate them.

Additionally, universities must uphold the principles of justice, honesty, and transparency in all decisions and actions. All faculty members, including physical education teachers, should be treated equally. Failing to do so can lead to increased organizational cynicism, which, in turn, may prompt teachers to leave their positions. It is essential to recognize that every qualified physical education teacher who leaves the institution takes with them valuable knowledge and experience accumulated over years of teaching and practice (Aygün, 2021).

These principles are particularly important as research suggests that for physical education teachers, job satisfaction is closely linked to a supportive work environment and transparent, fair decision-making processes (Yim, 2015; Khalaf, 2024). Failure to address organizational cynicism can lead to lower job satisfaction and increased turnover intentions among this group of educators.

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