

The Relationship of Sense of Coherence, Wisdom, and Mindfulness with Teachers' Calling: The Mediating Role of Spiritual Ability

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship of sense of coherence, wisdom, and mindfulness with teachers' calling, considering the mediating role of spiritual ability. In terms of purpose, the study was applied, and in terms of its nature, it employed a correlational design based on structural equation modeling. The statistical population consisted of all 3,630 female teachers in Urmia during the 2025–2026 academic year, from whom 590 teachers were selected using two-stage cluster sampling. Data were collected using the Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (Dik et al., 2012), Wisdom Scale (Schmit et al., 2012), Langer Mindfulness Scale (Langer, 2004), Sense of Coherence Scale (Antonovsky, 1987), and Spiritual Attitude Questionnaire (Shahidi & Farahnia, 2020). Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods in SPSS and AMOS. The findings indicated that sense of coherence, wisdom, spiritual ability, and workplace spirituality had significant direct effects on teachers' calling ($p < .05$), whereas mindfulness did not have a significant direct effect on calling ($p > .05$). Furthermore, the mediating role of spiritual ability in the relationships of wisdom and mindfulness with calling was confirmed ($p < .05$), whereas its mediating role in the relationship between sense of coherence and calling was not supported ($p > .05$). The goodness-of-fit indices of the structural model indicated an acceptable fit of the proposed model to the collected data. Accordingly, strengthening teachers' wisdom, mindfulness, and spiritual ability may contribute to enhancing their sense of calling.

Keywords: spiritual ability, sense of coherence, wisdom, mindfulness, calling

1. Introduction

Teaching is a profession in which occupational performance is inseparable from personal meaning,

psychological resources, professional identity, and the capacity to sustain purposeful engagement under demanding interpersonal and organizational conditions. Teachers are expected not only to transfer knowledge but also to manage

classrooms, adapt to curricular and technological changes, regulate emotions, respond to diverse learner needs, maintain professional relationships, and continue developing their competencies despite workload pressures and institutional constraints. In this context, the concept of career calling has increasingly attracted attention because it captures a deeper form of occupational orientation in which individuals experience their work as meaningful, purposeful, and connected to values that transcend purely economic or instrumental motives. A calling can function as a motivational resource that organizes professional goals and strengthens persistence, commitment, and identification with one's occupation. Research has shown that calling is associated with life satisfaction and can exert its effects through meaningful psychological and vocational mechanisms (Duffy et al., 2012). In teachers specifically, calling appears to be related to career success, mastery-oriented teaching practices, professional commitment, and active efforts to reshape job demands and resources through job crafting (Mohammadi et al., 2023). Recent evidence also suggests that calling may strengthen teachers' self-efficacy, professional competencies, and occupational satisfaction, highlighting its potential role as a central psychological resource in educational settings (Dumulescu et al., 2025). Similarly, among college teachers, calling has been shown to contribute to the relationship between professional identity and career satisfaction, indicating that perceiving teaching as a calling may help transform professional identification into more positive occupational experiences (Wu et al., 2024). These findings make the study of antecedents of calling particularly important because the psychological conditions that foster calling may ultimately contribute to teacher effectiveness, persistence, and well-being.

The relevance of career calling becomes even clearer when considered in relation to teachers' sustained engagement and resilience. Calling has been found to reduce teacher burnout indirectly through work engagement and psychological capital, suggesting that teachers who perceive their work as purposeful and personally significant may be better able to mobilize psychological resources against chronic occupational strain (Zhao et al., 2022). From a self-regulation perspective, calling is also linked to career exploration, self-reflection, career adaptability, and subjective well-being, indicating that calling is not merely a static occupational belief but may emerge and develop through reflective and adaptive career processes (Ran et al., 2023). Among rural-oriented pre-service teachers, career

calling has been associated with resilience through career adaptability and perceptions of decent work, further demonstrating that calling may serve as a bridge between vocational meaning and psychological persistence (Wen et al., 2023). More recent research has shown that perceived social support may facilitate career calling among pre-service teachers through vocational outcome expectations and professional identity, which implies that calling develops through interactions between internal appraisals and social-contextual experiences (Shang et al., 2026). Likewise, teacher calling has been linked to work engagement through self-efficacy and supportive leadership-related processes, reinforcing the view that calling can activate motivational mechanisms that sustain energetic and enthusiastic participation in teaching (Zhang et al., 2026). In other occupational groups, calling has also been associated with proactive work behavior and vitality through promotion focus and job crafting (Naami & Askari, 2024). Collectively, these findings suggest that calling is embedded in a broader network of cognitive, motivational, existential, and interpersonal processes and therefore may be influenced by psychological characteristics that help individuals understand adversity, make wise judgments, remain mentally flexible, and perceive a transcendent dimension in their work.

One psychological construct that may contribute to calling is **sense of coherence**, a salutogenic orientation reflecting the extent to which individuals perceive internal and external experiences as comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful. Individuals with a strong sense of coherence tend to interpret stressors as structured rather than chaotic, believe that adequate resources are available to address demands, and experience life challenges as worthy of investment and engagement. These characteristics may be especially important in teaching, where occupational demands are recurrent and often unpredictable. A teacher who perceives professional difficulties as understandable and manageable may be more capable of integrating challenging experiences into a stable vocational identity, while the meaningfulness component of sense of coherence may be particularly relevant to the experience of calling. Empirical work has demonstrated that sense of coherence is related to adaptive psychological functioning across diverse populations and is associated with sociodemographic and health-related characteristics, supporting its status as a broad resilience-related orientation (Jasiński et al., 2025). In Iranian research, sense of coherence has also been incorporated into path models explaining maladaptive

behavioral tendencies, with emotion-regulation difficulties operating as an important mechanism, suggesting that coherence may exert its influence partly by organizing emotional and cognitive responses to stress (Akbari et al., 2021). For teachers, who routinely encounter ambiguous demands, interpersonal conflict, evaluation pressure, and role overload, a stronger sense of coherence may therefore facilitate a more stable perception of professional meaning and strengthen the belief that teaching is not merely an occupation but a purposeful vocation.

Another potentially important antecedent of calling is **wisdom**. Wisdom is a multidimensional psychological capacity involving reflective thought, openness to different perspectives, practical judgment, sensitivity to complexity and contradiction, interpersonal understanding, and the integration of experience into mature decision-making. A multidimensional conceptualization of wisdom emphasizes that wise functioning cannot be reduced to intelligence or knowledge alone but involves the coordinated use of reflective, practical, experiential, and interpersonal capacities (Schmit et al., 2012). Such qualities may be highly relevant to teachers because educational work frequently requires balancing competing demands, tolerating uncertainty, interpreting student behavior from multiple viewpoints, and making context-sensitive decisions with ethical and long-term consequences. Contemporary psychological scholarship has further emphasized “wisdom in action,” arguing that wisdom should be understood not only as an individual trait but also as a capacity that can be applied to complex real-world problems requiring integration across perspectives and disciplines (Glück & Brienza, 2025). Within teaching, wisdom may help educators move beyond procedural task completion toward a more coherent understanding of the social and moral significance of their work. Through reflective processing, practical reasoning, and openness, wiser teachers may be more likely to see teaching as an opportunity to contribute to learners and society, thereby increasing the likelihood of experiencing their professional role as a calling.

Mindfulness constitutes a third psychological factor that may be connected to career calling. In a broad psychological sense, mindfulness involves conscious awareness of present experiences, attention to contextual information, openness to novelty, cognitive flexibility, and reduced reliance on rigid habitual categories. These qualities can facilitate adaptive functioning by enabling individuals to respond to changing conditions with greater awareness and less automaticity. In workplace contexts, mindfulness interventions have

received growing empirical attention because they may improve psychological functioning and support adaptive responses to occupational stress. A randomized controlled trial comparing mindfulness training with acceptance and commitment therapy in the workplace demonstrated the practical relevance of mindfulness-based approaches for employee psychological functioning and occupational outcomes (Christodoulou et al., 2024). Research has also linked mindfulness to job performance through mechanisms such as leadership processes and employee creativity, suggesting that mindful awareness may translate into more effective work behavior when supported by appropriate psychological and organizational pathways (Mohammadi Fateh, 2023). For teachers, mindfulness may facilitate attention to students, greater sensitivity to classroom dynamics, flexible responding, and reduced automatic reactions to stressful situations. However, mindfulness may not necessarily translate directly into a stronger sense of calling. It may instead enhance teachers’ openness to meaning, reflection, inner awareness, and transcendence, which could then strengthen their calling indirectly through a more spiritually integrated interpretation of their professional role.

This possibility brings attention to **spiritual ability** as a potentially important mediating mechanism. Spirituality in organizational and occupational psychology generally refers to experiences of meaning, connectedness, transcendence, inner values, and a sense that work contributes to something larger than individual self-interest. Workplace spirituality has emerged as a significant construct because employees do not necessarily experience their professional lives only in economic or task-oriented terms; rather, many seek coherence between personal values, inner purpose, relationships, and organizational participation. Systematic reviews indicate that workplace spirituality is associated with a wide range of beneficial individual and organizational outcomes and has become a substantial field of inquiry in organizational research (Singh & Singh, 2022). A more recent systematic review similarly highlights the multidimensional nature of workplace spirituality and emphasizes the need to clarify its antecedents, mechanisms, and behavioral consequences (Dubey & Bedi, 2024). Global evidence also indicates that workplace spirituality is closely associated with employee well-being, suggesting that meaningfulness, connectedness, and transcendence may serve as psychological resources in demanding work contexts (Syahir et al., 2025). At the organizational level, research on organizational spirituality has further shown

meaningful associations among spirituality at work, broader organizational spiritual characteristics, and job satisfaction (Wnuk & Charzyńska, 2025). These findings indicate that spiritual dimensions of work may be especially important in professions such as teaching, where service to others, ethical responsibility, social contribution, and long-term influence are integral to the occupational role.

The significance of spirituality in educational settings is further supported by research demonstrating its relationships with professional functioning and organizational outcomes. Workplace spirituality has been linked to behavioral consequences that are valuable for organizations, suggesting that spiritual experiences at work may shape how employees engage with their roles and colleagues (Safari et al., 2019). In educational organizations, spiritual intelligence and workplace spirituality have also been examined as predictors of school principals' performance in empowering teachers and school staff, with organizational intelligence considered as a mediating mechanism (Moghadam Hosseini, 2024). Among employees more broadly, religiosity and psychological capital have been shown to influence career calling through job meaningfulness, which directly connects spiritual-value orientations with the experience of work as a vocation (Rastgar et al., 2022). Research has also shown that workplace spirituality can mediate the relationships of self-transcendence and spiritual transcendence with innovative work behavior, indicating that spirituality may operate as an intermediary through which deeper personal orientations are transformed into adaptive occupational behavior (Sode & Chenji, 2024). In higher education institutions, workplace spirituality has been associated with employee well-being, work-family integration, and loyalty, further supporting its broad relevance to educational employment contexts (Jinu, 2025). These findings suggest that spiritual ability may represent more than a general religious or philosophical orientation; rather, it may reflect an individual capacity to recognize meaning, transcend immediate pressures, integrate values into behavior, and connect personal experience with a wider sense of purpose.

From this perspective, spiritual ability may plausibly mediate the relationships of wisdom and mindfulness with career calling. Wisdom may provide the reflective and integrative capacities needed to recognize complexity, understand the consequences of one's actions, and orient oneself toward broader human concerns. These capacities may strengthen spiritual ability by helping individuals identify transcendent meaning and value in everyday professional experience. In turn, increased spiritual ability

may enable teachers to interpret teaching as service, contribution, and purposeful engagement, thereby intensifying calling. Mindfulness may operate through a related but distinct pathway. By increasing awareness, openness, and cognitive flexibility, mindfulness may enable teachers to notice meaningful aspects of work that might otherwise be obscured by routine, stress, or automatic responding. This heightened awareness may facilitate spiritual sensitivity and a stronger capacity to perceive interconnectedness, purpose, and transcendence in teaching. The possibility of such indirect pathways is consistent with growing research suggesting that important occupational outcomes often emerge through mediating psychological mechanisms rather than simple direct associations. Similarly, sense of coherence may relate to spiritual ability because the meaningfulness component of coherence overlaps conceptually with existential orientation; however, sense of coherence may also exert a more direct effect on calling by helping teachers interpret occupational demands as understandable, manageable, and worthwhile.

Despite the growing literature on calling, mindfulness, wisdom, sense of coherence, and workplace spirituality, these constructs have largely been investigated in separate lines of research. Existing studies have established that calling is associated with satisfaction, resilience, professional identity, self-efficacy, engagement, psychological capital, and adaptive career behavior (Duffy et al., 2012; Dumulescu et al., 2025; Wu et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2022). Other research has examined mindfulness as a workplace resource (Christodoulou et al., 2024; Mohammadi Fateh, 2023), wisdom as a multidimensional and action-oriented psychological capacity (Glück & Brienza, 2025; Schmit et al., 2012), sense of coherence as an adaptive orientation toward stress and meaning (Akbari et al., 2021; Jasiński et al., 2025), and spirituality as a source of well-being, meaningfulness, loyalty, innovation, empowerment, and positive organizational behavior (Dubey & Bedi, 2024; Jinu, 2025; Moghadam Hosseini, 2024; Safari et al., 2019; Singh & Singh, 2022; Sode & Chenji, 2024; Syahir et al., 2025; Wnuk & Charzyńska, 2025). However, less attention has been devoted to integrating these variables within a single explanatory model focused specifically on teachers' calling. Such integration is theoretically important because calling is likely to emerge from the combined influence of cognitive appraisal, reflective maturity, present-centered awareness, and spiritual meaning-making rather than from any single psychological characteristic in isolation. It is also practically important because identifying

both direct and mediated pathways can clarify which teacher capacities should be targeted in professional development and psychological interventions intended to strengthen vocational meaning and sustainable engagement.

Accordingly, the present study aimed to investigate the relationships of sense of coherence, wisdom, and mindfulness with teachers' career calling, with spiritual ability examined as a mediating variable.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study was applied in terms of purpose and correlational in terms of its nature and methodology, using a structural equation modeling (SEM) design to examine the relationships among exogenous variables (sense of coherence, wisdom, and mindfulness), the mediating variable (spiritual ability), and the endogenous variable (calling). The study population comprised all female teachers in Urmia during the 2025–2026 academic year. In terms of purpose, the study was applied, while in terms of data collection, it was a descriptive-correlational study based on structural equation modeling. This approach makes it possible to investigate direct and indirect relationships among variables and to analyze complex structures. The total population consisted of 3,630 teachers, including 1,806 in Educational District 1 and 1,824 in Educational District 2.

From the statistical population, 590 female teachers were selected through two-stage cluster sampling. To estimate the required sample size for structural equation modeling, recommendations provided by Tabachnick and Fidell (2019), Kline (2016), and Hair et al. (2019) were considered. These recommendations determine the minimum sample size according to the number of observed variables (items), the number of free parameters, and model complexity. Tabachnick and Fidell suggested rules of thumb including a minimum sample of 200 for moderately complex models and 300–500 participants for complex models, as well as ratios of 5–10 participants per observed variable and similar ratios for each freely estimated parameter.

In the present study, inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to select a homogeneous and appropriate sample for investigating the variables of interest. According to the inclusion criteria, participants were female teachers employed in schools in Urmia who worked either full-time or part-time within the formal educational system, whether public or private, during the 2025–2026 academic year; were between 25 and 60 years of age; and had at least three years

of teaching experience to ensure sufficient exposure to the educational environment. In addition, based on self-report, they had no formal diagnosis of severe psychiatric disorders, such as severe depression or psychotic disorders, that could potentially affect their responses to the questionnaires. The exclusion criteria included failure to complete more than 20% of the questionnaire items, withdrawal from participation during the study, no longer meeting the population criteria (not being employed in Urmia during the 2025–2026 academic year or being unavailable because of long-term leave exceeding three months), and providing invalid data characterized by abnormal response patterns, such as uniform or random responding; such cases were excluded from the analyses.

The present study was conducted from November 2025 to February 2026 after obtaining approval from the research ethics committee. The statistical population comprised all teachers, including elementary-school teachers, secondary-school teachers, and vocational instructors, working in schools in Urmia, which are organized into two educational districts. Educational District 1 included 60 schools, whereas Educational District 2 included 54 schools. Two-stage cluster sampling was used to select the sample. In the first stage, Urmia was divided into two principal clusters according to its educational districts (District 1 and District 2), and both districts were included in the study. In the second stage, schools within each district were stratified according to educational level. District 1 comprised 26 elementary schools, 18 lower-secondary schools, and 16 upper-secondary schools, while District 2 comprised 29 elementary schools, 12 lower-secondary schools, and 13 upper-secondary schools. A number of schools were then randomly selected from each educational level within each district. Specifically, eight elementary schools, six lower-secondary schools, and five upper-secondary schools were selected from District 1, while 10 elementary schools, four lower-secondary schools, and four upper-secondary schools were selected from District 2. Thus, a total of 37 schools were selected as clusters. In the subsequent stage, teachers within each selected school were randomly selected and provided with the questionnaires. Accordingly, 1,120 printed questionnaires were distributed in person among teachers in the selected schools. Respondents were initially given one week to complete the questionnaires carefully and without time pressure, although some schools returned completed questionnaires as late as one month after distribution. Of the questionnaires distributed, 119 were not

returned, and 1,001 questionnaires were returned to the researcher, yielding a response rate of 89.4%.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (CVQ). This questionnaire was developed by Dik et al. (2012). It comprises six components categorized under two principal dimensions: presence of calling and search for calling. Responses are scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. International studies have demonstrated satisfactory construct validity for the instrument, and factor analyses have supported its six-factor structure (Dik et al., 2012). The questionnaire has also demonstrated convergent validity, showing positive associations with variables such as job satisfaction, professional commitment, and clarity of vocational identity (Duffy et al., 2012). The reliability of the instrument has been examined in various international studies, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .85 to .92 for the original version, indicating satisfactory internal consistency (Dik et al., 2012). In Iran, the questionnaire was standardized by Motahari-Nezhad and Baluchi (2018) among 643 university students. Reliability coefficients for the six components ranged from .70 to .76. Confirmatory factor analysis was employed to assess construct validity. The findings supported the six-factor structure in terms of item differentiation and consistency with the theoretical foundations. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire was .87.

Langer Mindfulness Scale (LMS). This scale was developed by Langer (2004) and consists of 21 items and four subscales: engagement with the environment, novelty seeking, flexibility, and novelty producing (Langer, 2004). Respondents answer the items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. The overall reliability of the instrument, calculated using Cronbach's alpha, was reported as .83. Reliability coefficients were also reported for the subscales, including values of .63, .74, .83, and .63 for engagement, novelty seeking, flexibility, and novelty producing, respectively (Langer, 2004). Psychometric evaluations of the original LMS reported comparative fit index (CFI) values ranging from .92 to .95 and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) values ranging from .052 to .063 (Bodner et al., 2012). In Iran, the scale was standardized by Memari and Hamidi (2016). The findings demonstrated four constructs, consistent with the original version. The questionnaire was

subsequently administered to 385 female teachers working in girls' high schools in Tehran. Reliability coefficients for the factors ranged from .510 to .751. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .72.

Wisdom Scale (WS). The Wisdom Scale was introduced by Schmit et al. (2012) as a collaborative project involving researchers from the Universities of Georgia, Louisiana, and Nevada. It is a 21-item self-report measure rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The developers selected 220 university students with a mean age of 22.68 years (range = 19–57 years) as participants, of whom 117 (53%) were women and 103 (47%) were men. Of these participants, 13% were employed full-time, 41% were employed part-time, and 46% were unemployed. The initial version of the scale contained 46 items. Following exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, 21 items were retained and, based on the theoretical framework, represented six dimensions: reflective (3 items), openness (3 items), interactive (3 items), practical (3 items), paradoxical (4 items), and experience (5 items). In scoring the Wisdom Scale, two openness items ("I do not like art" and "I do not enjoy going to art museums") and all items within the paradoxical dimension are reverse-scored, whereas the remaining items are scored positively. In Iran, the questionnaire was standardized by Akbari et al. (2016) among 278 university students. Factor analysis, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were used to evaluate validity. Principal component analysis confirmed the existence of six factors. The reliability of the total scale and subscales was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .71 to .80 and test-retest coefficients ranging from .71 to .78. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .79.

Sense of Coherence Questionnaire (SOC-13). This questionnaire was developed by Antonovsky (1987) and is a validated instrument for assessing psychological coherence and individuals' capacity to cope with stress. It consists of 13 items covering three dimensions: comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness. Responses are scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7. Items 1, 2, 3, 5, and 7 are reverse-scored. Total scores range from 13 to 91 and indicate an individual's level of psychological coherence. Scores from 13 to 63 indicate a low sense of coherence, scores from 64 to 79 indicate a moderate sense of coherence, and scores from 80 to 91 indicate a high sense of coherence. International studies have demonstrated satisfactory construct validity for the SOC-13, with factor analyses supporting the dimensional structure of the

instrument (Eriksson & Lindström, 2005). Furthermore, the SOC-13 has demonstrated convergent validity and positive associations with variables such as mental health, resilience, and quality of life (Flensburg et al., 2012). The reliability of this instrument has been evaluated in several international studies, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .70 to .90 have been reported for the SOC-13 (Mittelmarm et al., 2017). In Iranian studies, the Persian version of the SOC-13 demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .77 (Rahimian Bogar et al., 2018). Factor analysis of the Persian version showed that 53.49% of the total variance was explained by four identified factors, indicating satisfactory psychometric properties. Moreover, the correlation between the SOC-13 and the Psychological Hardiness Questionnaire was reported to be .54, supporting convergent validity among Iranian populations. In the study by Akbari et al. (2021), reliability coefficients of .65 for comprehensibility, .79 for manageability, .63 for meaningfulness, and .87 for the total sense-of-coherence score were reported. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire was .81.

Spiritual Attitude Questionnaire (SOMQ). This questionnaire was developed by Shahidi and Farajnia (2012) and consists of 43 items distributed across two subscales: spiritual attitude (24 items) and spiritual ability (19 items). It was designed to assess the level and development of spirituality. In the present study, only the spiritual ability subscale was used. The questionnaire is scored on a 5-point Likert scale, with scores of 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4 assigned to the response options "strongly disagree," "disagree," "somewhat agree," "agree," and "strongly agree," respectively. Its reliability was initially evaluated among 40 university students using the test-retest method over a five-week interval, yielding a coefficient of .61. The questionnaire was subsequently administered to 235 students at Shahid Beheshti University, and factor analysis using Varimax rotation identified two factors with eigenvalues greater than 5: spiritual attitude and spiritual ability. Internal consistency, assessed using Cronbach's alpha, was .91. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire was .84.

2.3. Data Analysis

During data screening and cleaning, 131 questionnaires were excluded because of incomplete responses and 280 questionnaires were excluded because of repetitive response patterns indicative of insufficient attention to the items. Consequently, 590 valid questionnaires were included in the statistical analyses. Statistical results were examined at both descriptive and inferential levels. At the descriptive level, demographic variables were initially summarized using frequencies and percentages, followed by descriptive statistics for the main variables using means and standard deviations. At the inferential level, statistical assumptions were first examined, including the absence of outliers using boxplots, univariate normality using skewness and kurtosis indices, multivariate normality using the critical ratio, absence of multicollinearity using the variance inflation factor, linearity of relationships using scatterplots, and independence of residuals using the Durbin-Watson test. Pearson's correlation coefficient was subsequently used to examine bivariate relationships among variables, after which the research model was evaluated using structural equation modeling. The mediating effect was assessed using the Sobel test. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 28 and AMOS version 26. The maximum alpha error level for hypothesis testing was set at .05 ($p < .05$).

3. Findings and Results

Regarding demographic characteristics, the largest group in terms of marital status consisted of married teachers, with 481 participants (81.5%), followed by single teachers with 94 participants (15.9%), divorced teachers with 10 participants (1.7%), and widowed teachers with five participants (0.8%). Regarding teaching level, 250 participants (42.4%) taught at the elementary level, 143 (24.2%) at the lower-secondary level, and 197 (33.4%) at the upper-secondary level. In terms of educational attainment, 12 participants (2.0%) had a high-school diploma or lower qualification, 13 (2.2%) held an associate degree, 239 (40.5%) held a bachelor's degree, 314 (53.2%) held a master's degree, and 12 (2.0%) held a doctoral degree. The mean age of the respondents was 42.07 years ($SD = 8.73$), with ages ranging from 25 to 65 years. The mean length of service was 15.58 years ($SD = 9.00$), ranging from 3 to 40 years.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness, and Kurtosis of the Study Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Engagement with the environment	17.91	4.05	−0.769	0.009
Novelty seeking	16.98	3.99	−0.554	−0.144
Flexibility	13.62	3.31	−0.671	−0.328
Novelty producing	12.62	3.17	−0.531	−0.347
Mindfulness (total)	61.12	12.39	−0.608	−0.129
Experience	18.97	3.55	−0.521	0.213
Practical	20.68	3.10	−0.746	0.492
Paradoxical	10.52	2.40	−0.278	−0.311
Openness	8.39	2.34	0.778	0.643
Reflective	10.35	2.83	−0.365	−0.264
Interactive	7.46	1.70	−0.581	0.214
Wisdom (total)	76.27	9.40	0.070	0.087
Comprehensibility	22.08	5.11	0.100	−0.263
Meaningfulness	20.02	4.17	0.099	−0.575
Manageability	17.03	4.27	0.235	−0.322
Sense of coherence (total)	59.12	11.04	0.372	−0.186
Spiritual ability	76.86	9.95	−0.336	−0.325
Presence of transcendent summons	13.97	3.81	−0.441	−0.403
Search for transcendent summons	15.32	4.08	−0.808	−0.141
Presence of purposeful work	15.19	4.19	−0.813	−0.137
Search for purposeful work	15.03	4.09	−0.673	−0.311
Presence of prosocial orientation	15.47	3.97	−0.918	−0.190
Search for prosocial orientation	15.07	4.03	−0.711	−0.243
Calling (total)	90.15	21.81	−0.832	0.011

As shown in Table 1, the mean mindfulness score was 61.12, with scores ranging from 25 to 84. The mean wisdom score was 76.27, with scores ranging from 47 to 101. The mean sense-of-coherence score was 59.12, with scores ranging from 33 to 90. The mean spiritual ability score was 76.86, with scores ranging from 47 to 95. Furthermore, the mean calling score was 90.15, with scores ranging from 28 to 120. Skewness and kurtosis values indicated that the distributions of the study variables did not substantially deviate from normality. The skewness and kurtosis values for all main variables fell within the range of −2 to +2, and

all values were also within the more conservative range of −1 to +1, indicating univariate normality.

Assessment of the multivariate normality assumption showed that the obtained critical ratio was 2.35, indicating that the multivariate distribution did not deviate beyond the acceptable range and that the assumption of multivariate normality could therefore be supported. Accordingly, covariance-based structural equation modeling was considered appropriate. Variance inflation factor values were below the criterion of 5. The Durbin–Watson statistic was 1.90, supporting the assumption of independence of regression residuals.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Matrix Among the Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Mindfulness	1				
2. Wisdom	−0.04	1			
3. Sense of coherence	0.02	0.20***	1		
4. Spiritual ability	0.15***	0.35***	0.19***	1	
5. Calling	0.02	0.17***	0.17***	0.40***	1

As presented in Table 2, the Pearson correlation matrix indicated that mindfulness was not significantly associated with wisdom, sense of coherence, or calling ($p > .05$), whereas it was positively and significantly associated with

spiritual ability ($p < .05$). Wisdom showed significant positive correlations with sense of coherence, spiritual ability, and calling ($p < .05$). Furthermore, sense of coherence was positively and significantly associated with

both spiritual ability and calling, and spiritual ability was positively and significantly correlated with calling ($p < .05$).

Figure 1

Empirical Research Model with Standardized Path Coefficients ($p < .05$, $p < .01$, $p < .001$)

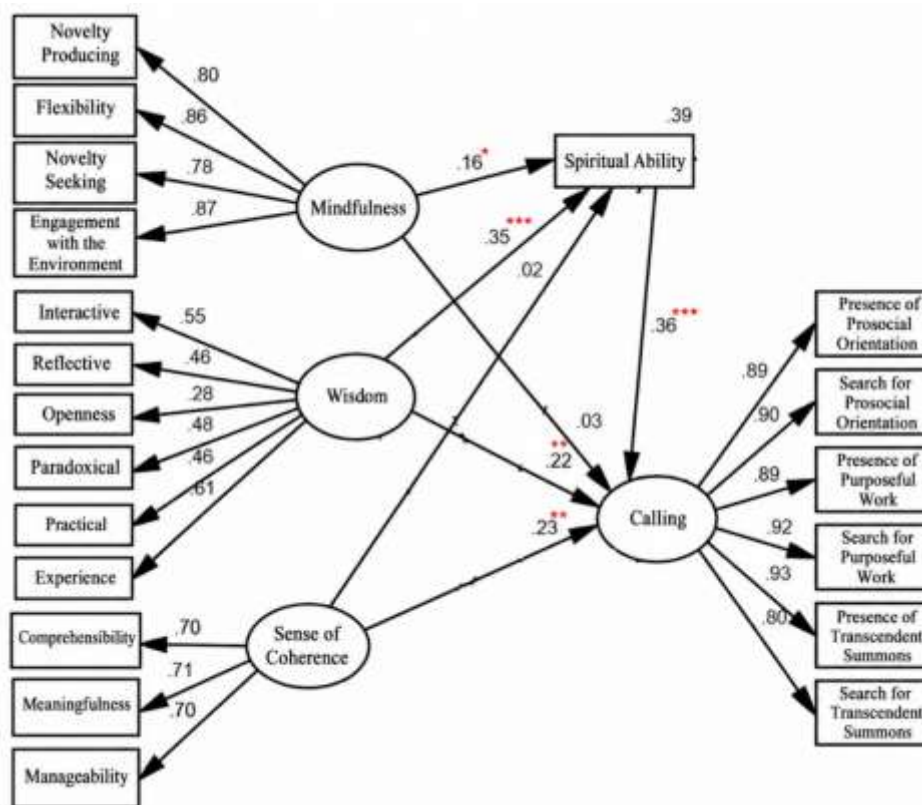


Figure 1 presents the empirical model in terms of standardized coefficients, which indicate the magnitude of the effects among the variables. The findings showed that the direct effect of mindfulness on calling was not statistically significant, whereas the direct effects of wisdom, sense of coherence, and spiritual ability on calling

were statistically significant. Examination of the standardized coefficients indicated that spiritual ability had the strongest effect on calling, with a standardized coefficient of .36. Model fit and hypothesis testing were subsequently examined. The model fit indices are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the Model

Index	χ^2/df	GFI	AGFI	IFI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
Model estimates	2.84	0.94	0.90	0.92	0.94	0.90	0.056

The results presented in Table 3 indicate that all calculated goodness-of-fit indices fell within acceptable ranges. Therefore, the collected data demonstrated an adequate fit to the proposed model, and the model was

supported. Table 4 presents the direct effects in the structural model examining the relationships of sense of coherence, wisdom, and mindfulness with teachers' calling, with spiritual ability considered as a mediator.

Table 4

Direct Effects of Sense of Coherence, Wisdom, and Mindfulness on Teachers' Calling in the Model Including Spiritual Ability as a Mediator

Relationship	Standardized Coefficient	t Value	p Value
Sense of coherence → Calling	0.23	2.98	< .001
Wisdom → Calling	0.22	2.83	< .001
Mindfulness → Calling	0.03	0.48	.631
Spiritual ability → Calling	0.36	4.54	< .001
Workplace spirituality → Calling	0.21	2.70	< .001

According to Table 4, the direct-effect analyses demonstrated that sense of coherence, wisdom, spiritual ability, and workplace spirituality had significant direct

effects on teachers' calling ($p < .001$). In contrast, mindfulness did not have a statistically significant direct effect on calling ($p > .05$).

Table 5

Test of the Mediating Role of Spiritual Ability in the Relationships of Sense of Coherence, Wisdom, and Mindfulness with Teachers' Calling

Indirect Effect	Standardized Coefficient	SE	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	p Value
Sense of coherence → Spiritual ability → Calling	0.008	0.019	-0.029	0.045	.676
Wisdom → Spiritual ability → Calling	0.126	0.033	0.061	0.191	< .001
Mindfulness → Spiritual ability → Calling	0.058	0.027	0.005	0.111	.033

The results presented in Table 5 indicated that sense of coherence did not exert a statistically significant indirect effect on calling through spiritual ability. The magnitude of this indirect effect was .008. Accordingly, the mediating role of spiritual ability in the relationship between sense of coherence and calling was not supported ($p > .05$). The findings further showed that wisdom exerted a significant indirect effect on calling through spiritual ability, with an indirect standardized effect of .126; therefore, the mediating role of spiritual ability in the relationship between wisdom and calling was supported ($p < .05$). Finally, mindfulness had a statistically significant indirect effect on calling through spiritual ability. The magnitude of this indirect effect was .058, confirming the mediating role of spiritual ability in the relationship between mindfulness and calling ($p < .05$).

4. Discussion

The present study examined the relationships of sense of coherence, wisdom, and mindfulness with teachers' career calling, with spiritual ability considered as a mediating mechanism. The structural model demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data, indicating that the proposed pattern of relationships among the variables was empirically tenable. The findings showed that sense of coherence, wisdom, spiritual ability, and workplace spirituality had significant positive direct effects on career calling, whereas mindfulness did not have a significant direct effect on calling. Among the predictors, spiritual ability demonstrated the strongest direct association with career calling, with a standardized coefficient of .36. The mediation analyses

further indicated that spiritual ability significantly mediated the relationship between wisdom and career calling and also significantly mediated the relationship between mindfulness and career calling. In contrast, the indirect effect of sense of coherence on career calling through spiritual ability was not statistically significant. Taken together, these findings suggest that teachers' experience of their profession as meaningful, purposeful, and vocationally significant is associated not only with their capacity to understand and manage life demands but also with reflective maturity and, most importantly, with their ability to interpret professional experience in spiritual and transcendent terms.

The significant positive effect of sense of coherence on teachers' career calling can be interpreted in light of the salutogenic perspective, according to which individuals with a stronger sense of coherence tend to perceive life events as comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful. Teaching frequently exposes individuals to ambiguous demands, emotional labor, classroom management challenges, institutional expectations, and uncertainty regarding outcomes. Under such circumstances, teachers who experience their professional environment as structured and understandable and who believe that sufficient personal and contextual resources are available to manage occupational demands may be better able to maintain a stable sense of purpose in their work. The meaningfulness component of sense of coherence is especially relevant because career calling also involves perceiving work as personally significant and worth sustained investment. The present result is consistent with research indicating that sense of coherence functions as a broad psychological resource

associated with adaptive functioning under difficult conditions (Jasiński et al., 2025). It is also compatible with evidence showing that sense of coherence can influence behavioral and psychological outcomes through individuals' capacity to organize and regulate responses to stress (Akbari et al., 2021). In teachers, therefore, a coherent interpretation of occupational demands may prevent routine stressors from fragmenting professional identity and may allow challenges to be incorporated into a larger narrative of meaningful work. This interpretation is also consistent with research on calling showing that when individuals experience work as purposeful, they demonstrate stronger engagement, psychological resources, and resilience against burnout (Wen et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2022).

Wisdom also had a significant positive direct effect on career calling. This result suggests that teachers who are more reflective, open-minded, practically oriented, capable of understanding contradictions, and able to integrate accumulated experience are more likely to perceive teaching as a vocation characterized by meaning and purpose. Wisdom may facilitate calling because calling requires more than occupational satisfaction; it involves an interpretation of work within a broader system of values, social contribution, and life purpose. Wise individuals are generally more capable of taking multiple perspectives, tolerating uncertainty, balancing competing interests, and integrating immediate experiences with longer-term considerations. These qualities are especially important in education, where teachers must respond to complex human situations rather than simply follow technical procedures. The present finding is consistent with the multidimensional conceptualization of wisdom proposed in previous research, in which reflective, practical, interpersonal, experiential, and openness-related dimensions jointly contribute to mature judgment and behavior (Schmit et al., 2012). It is also aligned with the contemporary view of "wisdom in action," which emphasizes the application of wisdom to complex real-world challenges and socially consequential problems (Glück & Brienza, 2025). Through such capacities, teachers may recognize the broader human and social implications of their work and consequently experience their occupational role as extending beyond task performance toward service, contribution, and professional mission. This interpretation is compatible with findings showing that career calling among teachers is associated with professional commitment, career success, mastery-oriented teaching, and constructive efforts to shape one's job (Mohammadi et al., 2023).

The strongest direct predictor of career calling in the present study was spiritual ability. This finding indicates that teachers who possess a greater capacity for spiritual awareness, transcendence, value integration, and meaning-making are more likely to experience their profession as a calling. Spiritual ability may allow individuals to connect everyday professional activities to a broader system of values and purposes and to interpret occupational responsibilities as contributing to the welfare of others. Such an interpretation is particularly relevant in teaching because educators frequently perform tasks whose value may not be immediately reflected in material rewards but may instead be understood through long-term influence on students, communities, and society. This result is consistent with a substantial body of workplace spirituality research showing that spiritual dimensions of work are associated with positive psychological and organizational outcomes (Dubey & Bedi, 2024; Singh & Singh, 2022). Systematic evidence also suggests that workplace spirituality contributes to employee well-being by enhancing meaningfulness, connectedness, and a sense of transcendence in occupational contexts (Syahir et al., 2025). In educational settings, spirituality has similarly been associated with employee well-being, loyalty, work-family integration, and positive organizational functioning (Jinu, 2025). Furthermore, Iranian research has linked spiritual intelligence and workplace spirituality with the capacity of school leaders to empower teachers and staff (Moghadam Hosseini, 2024). Collectively, these findings support the idea that spiritual ability represents a central psychological pathway through which occupational activities can be interpreted as personally meaningful and socially significant.

The observed positive direct effect of workplace spirituality on career calling provides additional support for this interpretation. Workplace spirituality refers to experiencing work through meaningfulness, connectedness, value congruence, and a sense that occupational activities contribute to purposes beyond narrow instrumental goals. Employees who perceive their workplace in this way may be more likely to regard professional activity as an expression of deeply held values, thereby strengthening career calling. The present finding is consistent with evidence indicating that workplace spirituality is associated with a variety of positive behavioral consequences and organizational outcomes (Safari et al., 2019). It also corresponds with systematic reviews identifying workplace spirituality as an important predictor of employee well-being, positive work attitudes, and meaningful occupational functioning (Dubey

& Bedi, 2024; Singh & Singh, 2022; Syahir et al., 2025). Research has further shown that workplace spirituality can operate as an intermediary between transcendent personal orientations and innovative work behavior (Sode & Chenji, 2024), while organizational spirituality has been associated with individual spirituality at work and job satisfaction (Wnuk & Charzyńska, 2025). In addition, religiosity and psychological capital have been shown to relate to career calling through job meaningfulness, directly illustrating how value-based and spiritual processes may be transformed into vocational meaning (Rastgar et al., 2022). Thus, when teachers perceive the school environment as supportive of meaningful work, human connection, and values beyond purely administrative demands, they may be more likely to experience teaching as a calling rather than merely as employment.

In contrast to the other predictors, mindfulness did not have a significant direct effect on career calling. This finding is noteworthy because mindfulness is generally associated with adaptive psychological functioning and beneficial workplace outcomes. However, mindfulness primarily represents a mode of awareness characterized by present-centered attention, sensitivity to context, openness to novelty, and cognitive flexibility; these capacities do not necessarily imply that an individual will interpret work as a life purpose or vocation. A teacher may be highly attentive, flexible, and aware of classroom experiences without necessarily attributing transcendent or existential meaning to teaching. Accordingly, mindfulness may influence career calling only when mindful awareness is transformed into a deeper meaning-making process. The present result is compatible with research showing that the effects of mindfulness on occupational outcomes may occur through mediating psychological and organizational mechanisms rather than through simple direct associations (Mohammadi Fateh, 2023). Evidence from workplace intervention research similarly suggests that mindfulness training can improve employee functioning, but its impact depends on the specific outcome and psychological processes under consideration (Christodoulou et al., 2024). Therefore, the absence of a direct relationship should not be interpreted as indicating that mindfulness is irrelevant to career calling; rather, it may indicate that mindfulness requires an interpretive or spiritual mechanism before it contributes to vocational meaning.

This interpretation is strongly supported by the significant mediating role of spiritual ability in the relationship between mindfulness and career calling. The indirect effect suggests

that mindfulness may enhance teachers' spiritual ability, which in turn strengthens calling. Mindfulness can facilitate awareness of internal experiences, openness to subtle aspects of daily life, reduced automaticity, and greater sensitivity to relationships and meaning. These capacities may enable teachers to recognize spiritual or transcendent dimensions of their work that would otherwise remain obscured by routine and occupational pressure. Once everyday teaching activities are interpreted through the lens of meaning, connection, contribution, and transcendence, the profession may increasingly be experienced as a calling. This mechanism is consistent with workplace spirituality research emphasizing that transcendent and meaning-related processes connect personal psychological orientations with desirable occupational outcomes (Sode & Chenji, 2024). It is also compatible with findings showing that spirituality at work is related to satisfaction and well-being (Syahir et al., 2025; Wnuk & Charzyńska, 2025). In this sense, mindfulness may function as an awareness-based precursor, whereas spiritual ability constitutes the meaning-making process that transforms such awareness into vocational significance.

Spiritual ability also significantly mediated the relationship between wisdom and career calling. This result suggests that wisdom contributes to calling partly because wiser teachers are better able to transform reflection, practical judgment, openness, experience, and awareness of complexity into spiritual meaning. Wisdom involves integrating knowledge and experience into balanced interpretations of life situations, while spiritual ability involves connecting experience with higher-order values, transcendence, and meaning. These constructs are therefore conceptually complementary. A wise teacher may be better able to appreciate the long-term significance of influencing students, tolerate the uncertainty inherent in education, and recognize that professional value cannot be reduced to immediate measurable outcomes. Through spiritual ability, such reflective understanding may become an experience of professional mission. This explanation is consistent with the conception of wisdom as a resource for addressing complex human problems and integrating multiple perspectives into meaningful action (Glück & Brienza, 2025). It also corresponds with research on career calling indicating that self-reflection and adaptive career processes contribute to calling and subjective well-being (Ran et al., 2023). Similarly, evidence showing relationships between calling, teacher self-efficacy, competencies, and satisfaction supports the proposition that calling emerges from complex

psychological mechanisms rather than a single isolated characteristic (Dumulescu et al., 2025). Thus, spiritual ability appears to represent one mechanism through which wisdom is translated into a deeper sense of vocational purpose.

In contrast, spiritual ability did not significantly mediate the relationship between sense of coherence and career calling. Although sense of coherence had a significant direct effect on calling, its indirect effect through spiritual ability was negligible. This pattern suggests that sense of coherence and spiritual ability may represent distinct pathways to vocational meaning. Sense of coherence may contribute to calling more directly by allowing teachers to experience occupational demands as understandable, manageable, and meaningful without requiring those experiences to be interpreted through specifically spiritual or transcendent processes. In other words, a teacher may experience work as coherent and worth investing in because professional demands fit within an understandable personal framework, even if this orientation does not substantially increase spiritual ability. This distinction is theoretically meaningful because the meaningfulness component of sense of coherence is motivational and existential, but not necessarily spiritual. The direct pathway is also consistent with broader evidence indicating that adaptive occupational functioning and calling may arise from different psychological resources, including psychological capital, professional identity, career adaptability, and self-efficacy (Shang et al., 2026; Wu et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2022). Recent research has further shown that teacher calling can be reinforced by self-efficacy and motivational processes and can subsequently contribute to greater work engagement (Zhang et al., 2026). Therefore, teachers may arrive at a sense of professional calling through several parallel routes, some primarily cognitive and resilience-related and others more explicitly spiritual.

5. Conclusion

Overall, the findings support a multidimensional understanding of teachers' career calling. Calling appears to be associated with teachers' ability to construct coherence from occupational experience, exercise wise and reflective judgment, and connect professional work to spiritual meaning. The results also clarify why mindfulness may not directly predict calling despite its potential psychological value: awareness and flexibility alone may be insufficient unless they contribute to a deeper process of meaning

construction. This interpretation is consistent with the broader career-calling literature, which emphasizes that calling is linked with professional identity, satisfaction, adaptability, resilience, engagement, job crafting, and proactive occupational functioning (Naami & Askari, 2024; Ran et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2024). Perceived social support and professional identity may also contribute to the development of calling among future teachers (Shang et al., 2026), while calling itself may strengthen teachers' work engagement through motivational mechanisms such as self-efficacy (Zhang et al., 2026). Therefore, the present findings extend prior research by identifying spiritual ability as an important intermediary linking both mindfulness and wisdom with calling and by demonstrating that sense of coherence may contribute to calling through a distinct, primarily direct pathway.

The present study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the correlational and cross-sectional design does not permit definitive causal conclusions regarding the direction of the relationships among sense of coherence, wisdom, mindfulness, spiritual ability, and career calling. Although structural equation modeling allows simultaneous examination of theoretically specified direct and indirect relationships, alternative causal configurations remain possible. Second, all variables were measured through self-report questionnaires, which may increase the likelihood of common-method variance, social desirability effects, and response-style biases. Third, the sample consisted exclusively of female teachers from schools in Urmia, which limits the generalizability of the findings to male teachers, educators working in other geographical regions, and teachers operating within different sociocultural and educational systems. Fourth, some questionnaires assess multidimensional constructs whose meanings may partly overlap, particularly regarding meaningfulness, spirituality, and calling. Finally, although the sample size was adequate for the proposed structural model, unmeasured variables such as professional identity, psychological capital, perceived organizational support, school climate, leadership style, job demands, and occupational stress may also explain meaningful variance in teachers' career calling.

Future studies are recommended to employ longitudinal and prospective designs to determine whether changes in mindfulness, wisdom, sense of coherence, or spiritual ability precede changes in career calling over time. Experimental and intervention-based research could also examine whether programs designed to enhance mindfulness, reflective

wisdom, meaning-making, or spiritual competencies produce measurable improvements in teachers' calling. Replication among male teachers, educators from different provinces and countries, teachers at different educational levels, and professionals in other helping occupations would clarify the generalizability of the proposed model. Future research could additionally test more complex models incorporating professional identity, self-efficacy, job crafting, psychological capital, resilience, perceived organizational support, transformational leadership, and school climate as moderators or additional mediators. Multigroup analyses may determine whether structural pathways differ by teaching level, years of service, age, or educational attainment. Researchers may also benefit from using mixed methods, including qualitative interviews, to examine how teachers themselves describe the processes through which mindfulness, wisdom, coherence, and spirituality contribute to the experience of teaching as a calling.

The findings suggest that educational administrators and teacher-development programs should not treat career calling as a fixed personal characteristic but as an occupational orientation that may be strengthened through psychological and professional development. Training programs can incorporate reflective exercises, perspective-taking, ethical decision-making, and experience-based problem solving to promote dimensions of wisdom relevant to teaching. Mindfulness-based activities may be particularly useful when combined with meaning-centered and values-oriented exercises that help teachers connect present-moment awareness with a broader understanding of professional purpose. Schools can also create opportunities for teachers to reflect on the social contribution of their work, discuss meaningful professional experiences, and develop a stronger sense of connection with students, colleagues, and institutional values. At the organizational level, clear role structures, accessible professional resources, supportive leadership, and predictable procedures may strengthen teachers' sense of coherence by making occupational demands more comprehensible and manageable. Finally, school systems may benefit from creating psychologically safe environments in which teachers can explore personal values, professional purpose, and the meaningful dimensions of education without imposing particular religious or ideological perspectives.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

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In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

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