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The Influence of Women's Leadership on Innovation Capability and Perceived Subordinate Support (A Preliminary Study)

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Abstract: This study investigates the relationships between women's leadership, perceived subordinate support, and innovation capability within organizations in Jakarta, Indonesia. Despite a growing body of research on leadership and innovation, there remains a gap in understanding the specific contributions of women leaders and how subordinate support influences their effectiveness. Using a purposive sample of female leaders and employing a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach analysis, the research tested three key hypotheses. The preliminary findings revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between women's leadership and both innovation capability and perceived subordinate support. However, no direct, statistically significant relationship was found between perceived subordinate support and innovation capability. The results suggest that women leaders play a powerful and foundational role in an organization by fostering a supportive environment that, in turn, may indirectly influence innovation. This study contributes to the literature by highlighting the direct impact of women's leadership on key organizational outcomes, while also serving as a preliminary basis for future research on the mediating role of subordinate support.
Keywords: women's leadership; perceived subordinate support; innovation capability

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengevaluasi hubungan antara kepemimpinan perempuan, persepsi dukungan bawahan, dan kapabilitas inovasi dalam organisasi di Jakarta, Indonesia. Meskipun semakin banyak penelitian tentang kepemimpinan dan inovasi, masih terdapat kesenjangan dalam memahami kontribusi spesifik para pemimpin wanita dan bagaimana dukungan bawahan memengaruhi efektivitas mereka. Dengan menggunakan sampel purposif pemimpin wanita dan pendekatan Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), penelitian ini menguji tiga hipotesis utama. Temuan awal mengungkapkan hubungan positif yang signifikan secara statistik antara kepemimpinan wanita dengan kapabilitas inovasi serta persepsi dukungan bawahan. Namun, tidak ditemukan hubungan langsung dan signifikan secara statistik antara persepsi dukungan bawahan dan kapabilitas inovasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa para pemimpin wanita memainkan peran yang kuat dan mendasar dalam sebuah organisasi dengan menciptakan lingkungan yang suportif, yang pada gilirannya, dapat secara tidak langsung memengaruhi inovasi. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada literatur dengan menyoroti dampak langsung

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kepemimpinan wanita terhadap pencapaian utama perusahaan, sekaligus menjadi dasar awal untuk penelitian selanjutnya tentang peran mediasi dukungan bawahan.
Kata Kunci: kepemimpinan wanita; dukungan bawahan; kemampuan inovasi

INTRODUCTION

Despite a global push for diversity and increasing recognition of female leaders, challenges for women in leadership roles remain a significant issue, particularly in Indonesia (Widiastuti et al., 2024). This research examines the prevalent phenomenon of female leaders receiving inadequate support from their subordinates, which strongly suggests that traditional gender role perceptions are still deeply ingrained in the workplace. These outdated stereotypes create tangible barriers, compelling women to work harder to achieve the same level of recognition and respect that their male peers often receive automatically (Galizzi et al., 2024). This systematic bias, rooted in a culture that often codes leadership as a masculine trait, not only hinders the professional advancement of women but also compromises the overall effectiveness and potential of organizations (Sundermeier, 2024). Thus, a deeper understanding of these cultural and systemic obstacles is crucial for fostering a truly equitable professional environment in Indonesia.

Beyond a mere lack of support, this discrimination is also reflected in a systematic distrust of women's competence as leaders (Korkmaz et al., 2022). They are often subjected to unfair treatment and must overcome obstacles not faced by male leaders. Consequently, this phenomenon not only hinders women's career advancement but also undermines the overall performance of organizations, as valuable leadership potential cannot be optimally developed (Hing et al., 2023). Therefore, a deep analysis of the root causes and their impact on gender equality in the workplace, particularly in Indonesia, is of paramount importance.

Despite the growing interest in leadership studies, existing literature has predominantly focused on broad aspects of leadership, often overlooking the specific contributions of women leadership (Liden et al., 2025). Consequently, there's a gap in understanding how female leaders influence key organizational outcomes. Furthermore, while the significance of innovation capability for organizational success is well-established, its relationship with women's leadership styles has received limited attention (AlNuaimi et al., 2021). Most studies on innovation are not specifically contextualized within the unique dynamics of female-led teams (Mari et al., 2024).

This study aims to bridge this gap by examining the intricate relationships among these variables. Acknowledging that leadership is a two-way street, the research also incorporates the crucial variable of perceived subordinate support. This factor is key to understanding how female leaders are supported by their teams, which can, in turn, affect both their leadership effectiveness and the organization's capacity for innovation. By focusing on these three specific variables, this research will provide a more nuanced understanding of how women's leadership behaviors, coupled with a supportive subordinate environment, can drive innovation within an organization. Hence, the present study serves as a preliminary attempt to determine the relationship between women leadership, perceived subordinate support, and innovation capability among employees in Jakarta.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women Leadership

There are several methods for studying leadership in various settings, and many definitions of leadership. According to Yukl (2010), leadership is the process of encouraging both individual and group efforts to accomplish shared goals. Gardner et al. (2010) provided a detailed description of how a leadership theory classification system was developed to increase understanding of the idea.

Different leadership philosophies offer unique theoretical explanations for how leaders influence their followers' creative actions (Hughes et al., 2018). Better superior leadership will have a direct impact on employee performance without having to be mediated by employee engagement variables (Rembulan et al., 2021). Understanding the unique strategies used by leaders to empower people in

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many contexts is crucial as the domains of leadership and innovation study continue to grow, as well as during periods of significant upheaval and transition. Leaders treat their subordinates differently in one-on-one interactions, which leads to relationships of varying quality, according to the leader-member exchange hypothesis (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). By providing a significant amount of autonomy (Pan et al., 2012; Mamahit & Pangaribuan, 2024; Titanicko & Pangaribuan, 2025), allocating organizational resources (Gu et al., 2015), and fostering subordinate confidence (Liao et al., 2010), leaders can encourage creative performance in leader-subordinate interactions with high levels of leader-member exchange quality.

Government and organizational leaders have a significant influence on society for they make decisions that have a big impact on a lot of people. Women are notably underrepresented in these important roles, despite the fact that leaders have the ability to proactively effect positive changes (Parker et al., 2006). Women still only make up a small portion of senior managerial positions and seats in national parliaments, despite an overall increase in their employment rates (Miller, 2017).

The idea that males are better suited for leadership positions is one factor contributing to the underrepresentation of women in these positions. Traditionally viewed as male attributes, aggression and emotional toughness are frequently linked to top managerial positions (Hoyt, 2005; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007). This gives the impression that there is a struggle between what is required of a leader and what is expected of women. Women find it more difficult to get employed for these jobs as a result, and if they do, they are perceived as less effective. Furthermore, unfavorable stereotypes are frequently applied to women who defy these conventional standards.

Innovation Capability

Lawson and Samson (2001) describe innovation capabilities (ICs) as the capacity to consistently convert knowledge and creative concepts into new creations, processes, and systems that benefit the company and its stakeholders. ICs can be implicit and firmly rooted in both internal and external experiences, making them unique assets (Guan & Ma, 2003). They are also viewed as a company's capacity to create new goods by fusing strategic skills, innovative behaviors, and internal technological processes (Wang & Ahmed, 2004). They stand for the company's inherent capacity to innovate consistently and create value for both the company and its stakeholders (Saunila, 2016).

ICs may also be attributed to business culture, marketing initiatives, and the capacity to observe and react to the outside world (Akman & Yilmaz, 2008). A thorough understanding of ICs as a concept is presented, emphasizing its revolutionary value in supporting the on-going transformation of organizational knowledge into concrete innovations that strengthen the firm's competitive edge and promote long-term success. The truth becomes more complex, though, when one takes into account the dimensions that are employed to depict innovative skills.

Since creativity and idea management are methodical methods to idea generation that are informed by knowledge and vision, they stand out as essential elements of IC. Organizational systems and structures include goals for innovation, pay plans, and organizational hierarchies. Climate and culture play a significant role in successful creation. Communication, empowered staff, creative time, and a willingness to accept uncertainty are all elements that support the culture and climate construct. Lastly, companies that wish to interact with external networks and broaden their corporate knowledge base must prioritize technology management. It is evident that the many facets of ICs offer a thorough framework for comprehending and making the most of an organization's internal resources, helping the business remain innovative and adaptable in the face of changing circumstances (Lawson & Samson, 2001).

Subordinate Support

Followers of leaders or members of the organization may be committed to a variety of work-related aspects, including coworkers, teams, departments, physical office spaces, goods or services, the senior management team, the organization, etc. Burns (1978) distinguished three types of followers: passive followers who offered unqualified support, participation followers who offered support that was carefully negotiated, and close followers who functioned as subleaders. Hansen (1987) confirmed this,

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adding that followers were more than passive elements. According to Kelley (1988), "organizations stand or fall partly on how well their leaders lead but partly on how well their followers follow."

What this study refers to as "commitment to the supervisor" or "support for the leader" originates from organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is one of the key psychological ideas in organizational behavior (Becker, Billings, Eveleth, and Gilbert, 1996). Becker et al. (1996) at least make a distinction between loyalty to the workplace and allegiance to the boss. Every member of a department or team inside an organization that is headed by a senior manager or other person with a higher formal rank is regarded as a follower. This study found that work happiness is significantly influenced by followers' loyalty to the leader (Becker, 1992). Accordingly, human resource theory views work satisfaction as a key component of organizational success (Ullah, 2012; Edmans, 2012). Support for the leader is connected with the intensity of the psychological bond between the leader and the subordinate (Cheng et al., 2003). Subordinates who show a high degree of dedication to their leaders are likely to care about them and be willing to make an investment in their relationship, and vice versa. By expressing gratitude for each team member's distinct contributions and care for their well-being, leaders may increase organizational engagement (Iqbal, 2010).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The target population for the study is female leaders with at least one subordinate, currently working in the Jakarta area. This specific and narrow population requires a non-probability purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental sampling, is a technique where the researcher relies on their own judgment to select a sample that is representative of the population of interest. This is the most suitable method for this study due to the specific criteria for the respondents (female, has a formal leadership position, e.g. top management level, senior manager, manager, supervisor), has at least one subordinate or direct report, works within the administrative boundaries of the city of Jakarta). It allows for the deliberate selection of individuals who meet the predefined characteristics.

Based on the data provided, the descriptive analysis of the respondents' characteristics reveals a sample predominantly composed of experienced working adults. The majority of participants fall within the 28-43 (47.1%) and 44-59 (45.7%) age groups, collectively representing over 90% of the total sample. In terms of leadership roles, the distribution is broad but concentrated, with Managers (38.6%) and Supervisors (24.3%) making up the largest segments, suggesting a strong representation of mid-level leadership. However, the sample is not evenly distributed across industries, with the Education & Training sector being significantly overrepresented, comprising nearly half of all respondents 34 (4.9%), followed distantly by Manufacturing & Industry and Other Services (7 each, or 1.0%). This indicates that while the sample includes a range of leadership levels, the findings are heavily influenced by a population from a single industry.

The present investigation uses Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and the Partial Least Squares (PLS) methods. To facilitate data analysis and conclusion, the researchers divided the age range into three-year intervals. Consequently, the age ranges for this investigation were under 28 years, between 28 and 43, between 44 and 59, and above 59. The survey categorizes participants' roles into four levels: supervisor, manager, senior manager, and top management/C-level. It also classifies their organizations as private, government-owned, non-profit, private university, or public university. Additionally, respondents must specify their current industry.

The study begins with a screening question to confirm that participants have at least one direct report. Only those who answer "yes" are allowed to continue with the rest of the survey. For this study, the authors used a Likert scale to gather data. Participants responded to questions or statements for each variable by selecting a point on the scale that best reflected their opinion or answer of 1 to 5 (1 means "Strongly Disagree," 2 "Disagree," 3 "Neutral," 4 "Agree," 5 "Strongly Agree"). Answers from all respondents that meet the respondent criteria in this study will be processed using statistical analysis. The original items were in English and were translated into Indonesian. The proposed structural model can be seen in Figure 1.

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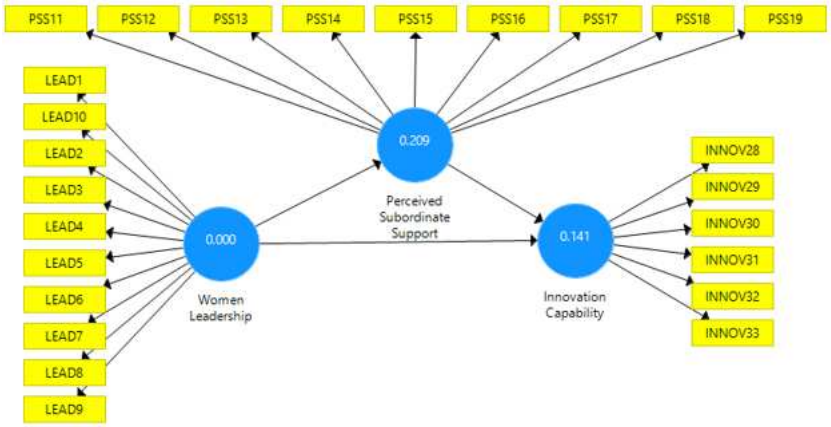

Figure 1 Framework Model using Smart-PLS

Scale Measurement

The survey questionnaire for this research utilizes items from past studies to measure three variables. For the "Innovation Capabilities" variable, six items from previous research (Yesil, 2014; Park et al., 2018) assess respondents' organizational innovation and creativity, and innovative behavior. Additionally, ten items from Hemsworth et al. (2013) evaluate the idealized influence (both attributes and behaviors), both inspirational and intellectual motivation, individualized consideration, measuring the "Women Leadership" variable. To gauge "Perceived Subordinate Support," nine items from Clayton, Jr. (2010) assess respondents' personal belief concerning the job, job-related behavioral, and job-related attitudinal. The framework model being examined in this study is depicted in Figure 1.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reliability refers to the consistency of a measure. Both Cronbach's Alpha (α) and rho_A (ρA) are used to assess the internal consistency reliability of a scale, with values above 0.70 generally considered acceptable, and values above 0.80 considered good (Wismiarsi et al., 2024). For the INNOV variable, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.873 and a rho_A of 0.904, this variable demonstrates strong reliability (see Table 1). The variable PSS shows excellent reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.913 and a rho_A of 0.925. The LEAD variable also exhibits excellent reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.916 and a rho_A of 0.918. All three variables meet and exceed the standard thresholds for reliability, indicating that the items measuring each construct are highly consistent and reliable.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) measures convergent validity, which is the extent to which a construct explains the variance of its indicators. An AVE value of 0.50 or higher is a recommended threshold, suggesting that the construct accounts for more than half of the variance of its items. As seen in Table 1, for the INNOV variable, the AVE of 0.624 is well above the 0.50 threshold, indicating good convergent validity. This means the INNOV construct successfully explains 62.4% of the variance in its measured items. The AVE for PSS is 0.593, which is also above the threshold, demonstrating good convergent validity. This construct explains 59.3% of the variance in its items. With an AVE of 0.574, the LEAD factor also shows good convergent validity, as its construct explains 57.4% of the variance in its items. All three variables demonstrate strong convergent validity, confirming that the items are good indicators of their respective latent constructs.

R^2 is a statistical measure that represents the proportion of the variance for a dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables in a regression model. In simpler terms, it tells you how well your model fits the data. In Table 2, for the INNOV variable, the R^2 value is 0.269. This means that approximately 26.9% of the variance in the INNOV variable can be explained by the independent variables in the model. For PSS, the R^2 value is 0.391. This indicates that approximately 39.1% of the variance in the PSS variable can be explained by the independent variables.

Adjusted R^2 is a modified version of R^2 that accounts for the number of predictors in the model. Unlike R^2, the adjusted R^2 will only increase if a new predictor improves the model more than would

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be expected by chance. It is often a more reliable measure for comparing models (for INNOV, the Adjusted R^2 is 0.246; for PSS, the Adjusted R^2 is 0.381). The fact that the adjusted R^2 values are slightly lower than the R^2 values is expected, as they penalize the model for having additional independent variables.

When comparing the two variables, the model for PSS has a better fit than the model for INNOV. The R^2 and Adjusted R^2 values for PSS are both higher, indicating that the independent variables are more effective at explaining the variance in the PSS variable. This suggests that the model is a better predictor for PSS than it is for INNOV.

Table 1 Results of Validity and Reliability Tests

Construct	Alpha	CR	AVE
INNOVATION CAPABILITY	0.873	0.906	0.624
PERCEIVED SUBORDINATE SUPPORT	0.913	0.928	0.593
WOMEN LEADERSHIP	0.916	0.930	0.574

Note: CR: Composite Reliability; AVE: Average Variance Extracted

Based on the provided HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait) ratio data (see Table 3), the results indicate that all constructs—innovation capability, perceived subordinate support, and women leadership—exhibit sufficient discriminant validity. This is because the HTMT values for all pairwise comparisons are below the conventional threshold of 0.85, and in this case, even below the more stringent threshold of 0.90. The HTMT value between innovation capability and perceived subordinate support is 0.273, the value between innovation capability and women leadership is 0.504, and the value between perceived subordinate support and women leadership is 0.473. Since all these values are well below the recommended threshold, it can be concluded that each of the three latent constructs is empirically distinct from the others and measures a unique phenomenon, thereby establishing strong discriminant validity for the measurement model.

Table 2 Results of R-Square

Construct	R^2	R^2 Adjusted
INNOVATION CAPABILITY	0.269	0.246
PERCEIVED SUBORDINATE SUPPORT	0.391	0.381

The study proposed three hypotheses that have been explained in the literature review of the paper, serving as the alternate hypothesis in this testing (see Table 4). The result of hypothesis one is not supported. With a p-value of 0.827, which is far greater than the standard significance level of 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that the relationship is not statistically significant. The t-statistic of 0.219 is very low, further confirming that there is no meaningful relationship between Perceived Subordinate Support and Innovation Capability in this model. The coefficient of 0.042 suggests a very weak positive effect, yet it is not significant. The relationship between PSS and INNOV might depend on other factors. For instance, PSS might only lead to innovation in companies that have a certain level of job autonomy or in specific industries. Although a supportive environment is generally considered essential for innovation, the data in this study suggests that it may not be a direct cause. The effect of support on innovation was too weak on its own to be statistically significant.

While the initial analysis correctly identifies the lack of a significant relationship between Perceived Subordinate Support (PSS) and Innovation Capability, integrating the descriptive data adds valuable context to this finding. The sample's heavy concentration of respondents from the Education & Training industry may partially explain the non-significant result. Unlike industries where tangible product or process innovation is a core business driver (e.g., technology or manufacturing), innovation in the education sector often manifests differently, perhaps as curriculum development or pedagogical methods, which may not be as directly influenced by a manager's perceived subordinate support.

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Additionally, the dominant age groups (28-43 and 44-59) represent a mature and experienced workforce that may have developed their own innovation skills and professional autonomy over time, potentially reducing their direct reliance on a manager's supportive behavior. Therefore, the lack of a direct link between PSS and innovation capability in this study might be a function of the specific demographic and industry characteristics of the sample rather than a universal truth, suggesting the relationship could be stronger in different contexts.

Table 3 Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Construct	INNOV	PSS	LEAD
Innovation Capability (INNOV)			
Perceived Subordinate Support (PSS)	0.273		
Women Leadership (LEAD)	0.504	0.473	

The result of hypothesis two is supported. The p-value (0.004) is less than 0.05, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. The t-statistic of 2.922 is strong, providing evidence that Women Leadership has a positive effect on Innovation Capability. The coefficient of 0.492 suggests a moderately strong positive relationship. This result shows significant positive relationship between women leadership and innovation capability, indicating that women in leadership roles are directly and positively associated with a company's ability to innovate.

The majority of the respondents are in their prime working years, with 92.8% of the sample aged between 28-59. This demographic represents a generation where gender diversity and women's roles in leadership have been increasingly emphasized and integrated into the workplace. It is plausible that this age cohort, particularly those in leadership positions, has a greater appreciation for the diverse perspectives and collaborative styles often associated with women leaders, which are known to foster innovation. The study's sample is also heavily concentrated in the Education & Training industry. This is a sector where women are highly represented, not only in the general workforce but also in leadership positions. This high representation might create a more inclusive environment where the positive effects of women's leadership on innovation are more pronounced and measurable than in male-dominated industries. The strong presence of women in leadership within the sample's dominant industry may have contributed to the significant positive correlation observed, suggesting that the findings could be particularly relevant to service-based and gender-diverse fields.

Table 4 Results of Hypothesis Test

Path	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values
PSS→INNOV	0.042	0.219	0.827
LEAD→ INNOV	0.492	2.922	0.004
LEAD→ PSS	0.625	4.557	0.000

The result of hypothesis three is strongly supported. The p-value (0.000) is well below 0.05, indicating a highly statistically significant relationship. The very high t-statistic of 4.557 provides strong evidence that Women Leadership has a significant and robust impact on Perceived Subordinate Support. The coefficient of 0.625 demonstrates a strong positive relationship. The result provides compelling evidence that women in leadership have a powerful and robust positive impact on perceived subordinate support. This finding suggests that women leaders are highly effective at fostering a positive and supportive environment for their teams.

The strong support for the relationship between Women Leadership and Perceived Subordinate Support is particularly reinforced by the sample's characteristics. The majority of respondents are from the Education & Training industry, a sector where collaborative, empathetic, and nurturing leadership styles are often valued. These qualities are frequently associated with transformational leadership, a style more commonly found in women leaders and one that is highly effective at building trust and a

sense of support among subordinates. The high number of managers and supervisors in the sample (38.6% and 24.3%, respectively) further contextualizes this finding. These are the individuals who directly manage teams and whose leadership styles have a profound and immediate impact on the daily experiences of their subordinates. Given that a significant portion of this group works in an industry that benefits from supportive leadership, it is logical that the presence of women leaders would be strongly correlated with higher levels of perceived support from their teams. The robust statistical results of this hypothesis may therefore reflect a synergy between the specific leadership attributes of women and the cultural norms and demands of the dominant industry in this study.

The findings suggest that while subordinate support itself may not directly drive innovation in this context, women leaders may be a key factor in creating an innovative environment. The strong link between LEAD → PSS combined with the significant link between LEAD → INNOV implies that women leaders may be creating a supportive environment (high PSS), and this supportive environment, in turn, may be influencing innovation through a more indirect path. The data strongly points to the conclusion that women leadership is a powerful, foundational element for both fostering a supportive workplace and driving innovation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the hypothesis tests, the study's findings reveal that women leadership is a critical factor for both fostering a supportive work environment and driving innovation. The results strongly support a significant positive relationship between women in leadership and a company's innovation capability, as well as a robust positive link between women leadership and perceived subordinate support. This suggests that women leaders are highly effective at creating a positive workplace culture and are directly associated with higher innovation.

Conversely, the study found no direct, statistically significant relationship between perceived subordinate support and innovation capability. While a supportive environment is often thought to be a precursor to innovation, the data indicates that its effect may be indirect or dependent on other factors not measured in this model. The overall conclusion is that women leadership plays a powerful and foundational role, possibly by creating a supportive environment that, in turn, influences innovation.

Due to the small and preliminary sample size, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to a larger population. Future research should investigate the potential mediating role of subordinate support in the relationship between women leadership and innovation capability to understand the full causal pathway.

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