

Exploring The Impact Of Workload Variation On Job Burnout Among Teachers In Higher Vocational Colleges: A Job Demand Resource Theory Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The study's objective was to investigate how workload variability affects teacher job burnout at China's higher vocational colleges. The study analyzed empirical data in order to understand how workload fluctuations, burnout, and job resources interact in order to provide solutions for enhancing well-being and educational quality. The research methodology involved a thorough analysis of empirical studies conducted over the previous ten years in China's vocational colleges. Using keywords like "workload variation," "job burnout," "job resources," "teachers," and "higher vocational colleges," relevant literature was found in internet databases and journals. To assure quality and relevance, strict screening standards were used. The influence of workload variance on higher vocational college professors was made clear by the results. Increased administrative responsibilities, changing curriculum, and fluctuating class numbers all contributed to higher stress levels and burnout. Burnout was characterized by emotional tiredness, cynicism, and a decline in self-actualization. However, burnout and its negative impacts were lessened by workplace tools like mentoring, professional development, peer support, and decision-making. The results emphasize the importance of addressing workload variability and burnout among teachers in higher vocational colleges. The well-being of teachers and the caliber of instruction can be improved with tailored interventions and enough employment resources. Institutions can provide a supportive climate that improves teacher satisfaction and the efficacy of vocational education by acknowledging the difficulties brought on by workload variability and burnout. The study recommends that optimizing class sizes, providing professional development, fostering peer support, balancing practical instruction and administrative responsibilities. In addition, there is need of providing mental health resources, involving teachers in decision-making, implementing evidence-based workload policies, encouraging adaptability, encouraging collaborative research, and ensuring sustainable practices through ongoing evaluation and adjustment

Keywords: *workload variation, job burnout, job resources, higher vocational colleges, teacher well-being, vocational education.*

1.0 Introduction

In China's educational system, vocational institutions play a unique and crucial role in meeting the changing needs of both students and the national economy (Gu et al., 2018). These institutions, which are an essential part of higher education, provide specialized programs made to provide students with useful information and skills, closely matching education to the needs of the labor market. Vocational colleges are essential in creating a competent workforce capable of satisfying the sophisticated demands of diverse industries in a world economy that is changing quickly. Vocational colleges give students practical training, technical know-how, and industry-specific competencies with a focus on applied learning (Ye et al., 2022). Vocational colleges help

students become marketable and capable of adapting to the changing demands of their chosen fields by bridging the gap between academic knowledge and practical application.

China's ambitions for technical innovation and industrial development serve to further highlight the importance of vocational colleges. Vocational colleges have emerged as talent incubators for a variety of sectors, including engineering, information technology, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing, as the nation seeks to shift from a manufacturing-based economy to one driven by innovation and advanced technologies (Segal, 2018). Vocational college's curricula are designed to give students the abilities that are in high demand on the labor market, coordinating education with business demands and fostering economic growth (Stal & Paliwoda-Pekosz, 2019).

Additionally, by providing accessible and varied educational options, vocational institutions help to increase social mobility. Vocational college's give people the chance to develop practical skills that lead to fulfilling and well-paying employment even if they are not following traditional academic paths (Guo et al., 2019). While fostering a balanced educational ecosystem that values both academic and vocational endeavors, this inclusive approach to education aids in addressing social difficulties like unemployment and skill shortages (Baskaran et al., 2019). Vocational colleges in China have recently been acknowledged for their support of innovation and entrepreneurship. In order to prepare students to become not only skilled employees but also prospective job creators and industry disruptors, these institutions encourage students to explore their creativity and cultivate entrepreneurial attitudes (Chopra & Bhilare, 2020). Vocational colleges play a key role in advancing local and national innovation agendas by providing an atmosphere that fosters creativity and real-world problem-solving (Lv, 2021). Teachers face significant expectations from the changing higher vocational education environment, which affects their experiences, perspectives, and general wellbeing. Teachers manage a complicated web of difficulties that may have an influence on their professional lives as educational institutions adjust to changing curricula, student demographics, and administrative needs.

According to Penprase (2018) the Chinese higher vocational education environment of today is distinguished by its response to industry demands, technology breakthroughs, and shifting labor market demands. Teachers are responsible with ensuring that students acquire the skills necessary for success in quickly expanding industries as new technologies and techniques are developed in addition to transmitting knowledge. Due to the dynamic nature of vocational education, it is essential for teachers to be both subject-matter experts and capable of facilitating hands-on learning opportunities (Dornan et al., 2019). Teachers in higher vocational colleges are also given more duties as a result of the increased emphasis on experiential learning and industry integration (Zheng et al., 2019). They are expected create and deliver courses that connect academic ideas with practical applications, developing students' capacity for innovation and problem-solving. The design of courses, instructional methods, and evaluation procedures all face difficulties in light of the evolving educational landscape (Vural-Batik, 2020).

Teachers' jobs are made more difficult by the heterogeneous student body in higher vocational colleges (Toropova et al., 2021). The backgrounds, prior knowledge, abilities, and aspirations of students are diverse. Flexibility and a thorough comprehension of student needs are necessary to adapt teaching strategies to account for these disparities and provide equal learning results (Gelles et al., 2020). Along with these difficulties, teachers also deal with the administrative facets of vocational education, such as organizing partnerships with businesses, interacting with neighborhood establishments, and keeping up with market developments (Day, 2020). The complex web of duties that professors in higher vocational colleges must juggle can include juggling the demands of teaching, administrative duties, and fostering industry connections.

Educational institutions, particularly higher vocational colleges, have witnessed significant shifts in recent years. Changes in curriculum, technological advancements, and evolving student expectations have transformed the teaching environment. Amidst these changes, teachers encounter a range of teaching tasks that can vary in intensity, scope, and demands. This variability in workload encompasses factors such as class sizes, the number of courses taught, curriculum modifications, and additional responsibilities. Understanding the extent of workload variation is pivotal in comprehending the unique challenges that teachers in higher vocational colleges face.

The landscape of higher vocational education is marked by its close connection to industry practices and the rapid pace of technological advancements. As industries evolve, curriculum content needs to be regularly updated to reflect the latest trends and practices, requiring teachers to stay current and continuously adapt their teaching materials (Mishra et al., 2020). This process can lead to fluctuations in workload as teachers invest time and effort into revising course content and materials. Moreover, class sizes in higher vocational colleges can vary widely based on enrollment numbers and program popularity. Larger classes may require more time for grading and providing individualized feedback, potentially affecting teachers' work-life balance. Additionally, the diversity of courses offered and the number of courses taught by each teacher contribute to workload variation. Handling multiple courses with distinct requirements demands effective time management and pedagogical adaptability.

Curriculum modifications and the integration of practical skills further contribute to workload variability (St-Onge et al., 2022). The need to incorporate hands-on learning experiences, industry projects, and internships necessitates adjustments to teaching methods and assessment strategies. These adaptations can introduce new challenges for teachers who must balance academic rigor with practical skill development. Furthermore, teachers in higher vocational colleges often take on additional responsibilities beyond teaching, such as

participating in curriculum development committees, industry collaborations, and student mentoring (Colognesi et al., 2020). These extracurricular activities can enhance the educational experience for students but can also contribute to workload disparities and potential burnout among educators. Teachers working in higher vocational education confront workplace burnout, a complex issue that includes emotional tiredness, cynicism, and a weakened sense of self-accomplishment. The backdrop of vocational education adds unique subtleties to the experience of job burnout as teachers attempt to balance administrative obligations with engaging students in practical, skill-based learning. It is crucial for promoting teachers' professional wellbeing and maintaining productive learning environments to be aware of the reasons causing job burnout in higher vocational colleges.

Job burnout has been extensively researched in a variety of educational contexts. It is defined by emotions of on-going tiredness, detachment from one's work, and a perception of diminished effectiveness (Lanza, 2020). However, it is crucial to consider burnout within this particular context because of the particular difficulties faced by professors in higher vocational colleges. In the context of vocational education, it is frequently necessary for teachers to close the gap between theoretical understanding and practical application (Amhag et al., 2019). This dynamic calls for integrating practical skills, engaging with industry partners, and using hands-on teaching methods. These requirements can increase emotional weariness while also enhancing the learning experience. This is especially true when teachers are constantly modifying and improving their teaching strategies. Another aspect of burnout that requires consideration in higher vocational colleges is cynicism or detachment from work (Lee et al., 2020). When they notice a disconnect between their attempts to deliver practical teaching and the more general educational objectives, teachers may become frustrated. The difficulty of juggling the demands of businesses, industries, and educational institutions can make educators feel discouraged.

Another aspect of burnout that teachers do experience in higher vocational institutions is a lessened sense of personal accomplishment (Jamaludin & You, 2019). In vocational education, where students' success frequently depends on their capacity to apply learned skills in real-world situations, this aspect is particularly challenging. Teachers' job satisfaction and effectiveness may decline when pupils' performance falls short of expectations. The landscape of vocational education makes burnout even more challenging by combining administrative and teaching responsibilities (Louws et al., 2018). Teachers regularly take part in curriculum development, business partnerships, and student career counseling at higher vocational colleges. While these activities improve learning, they may also increase workload and the risk of burnout.

The accessibility to professional tools is crucial as teachers handle the difficulties of varied workloads and job burnout. These tools cover a wide range, from access to mentoring and chances for skill development to peer support and participation in decision-making processes. Resources provided by the job act as important defenses against the damaging effects of workload changes and burnout, potentially boosting teachers' resilience and job satisfaction. The management of stress and burnout among educators has been linked to job resources. Due to the particular expectations imposed on teachers in higher vocational institutes, these resources have a greater significance. For instance, mentoring programs offer assistance and guidance to new teachers, assisting them in overcoming the difficulties of working in a vocational school context (Ersin & Atay, 2021). Teachers are given the tools they need to improve their teaching effectiveness and adapt to shifting educational environments when they have access to skill development opportunities, whether through professional development workshops or partnerships with industry partners (Shamir-Inbal & Blau, 2021). Furthermore, in higher vocational education, the value of colleagues and peer support cannot be overstated. Knowledge sharing, idea sharing, and mutual support are encouraged in collaborative contexts. Engaging with coworkers who have experienced similar things can reduce feelings of loneliness and foster a sense of community, which in turn can improve teachers' psychological wellbeing and job satisfaction. Burnout can be prevented by having a sense of purpose and community within a nurturing environment.

Another element of employment resources that may have an impact on teacher burnout at higher vocational colleges is participation in decision-making processes. Teachers are more likely to experience a feeling of ownership and dedication to their profession when they have a role in the development of curricula, policies, and instructional practices (Brezicha et al., 2020). This empowerment can help create a more supportive work atmosphere and balance out any sentiments of helplessness brought on by outside expectations. Understanding how teachers view the relationship between workload variability and job burnout is a critical component of our study. We get insights into the complex relationships between these elements by investigating teachers' subjective assessments of the impact of workload adjustments on their experiences of burnout. Strategies to reduce burnout and improve teachers' wellbeing in higher vocational college settings can be influenced by these insights. The amount of workload variance that educators in higher technical colleges face can have an impact on their overall job satisfaction and mental health. Teachers may experience stress and burnout if they believe workload variations are severe and unpredictable. On the other hand, workload changes may promote a sense of success and professional development when they are viewed as reasonable and in line with the inherent benefits of teaching (Hung et al., 2021). Many contextual and personal factors, as well as teachers' perceptions of the relationship between workload variance and burnout, might have an impact. For example, teachers with solid social support systems and efficient coping strategies may view workload changes as obstacles to be conquered rather than as stressors that cause. In addition, the way instructors interpret and react to workload differences might be influenced by their prior experiences, personal views, and professional objectives.

(Karousiou et al., 2019). For the purpose of creating focused interventions that address burnout and promote educators' wellbeing, it is essential to comprehend these perceptual distinctions.

Examining the connection between workload variety, job burnout, and job resources becomes even more important in the post-pandemic age with its special difficulties and opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic has altered education, requiring quick adjustments and developing new approaches to student engagement. Investigating how teachers manage changing teaching paradigms, make use of workplace resources, and deal with burnout becomes crucial in this situation for fostering resilient and successful vocational education. We can gain important insights into teachers' lived experiences and create ways to enhance their well-being and professional development by investigating how they perceive this changing educational environment.

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Workload Variation in Teaching Tasks

The significant effect of workload variance on instructors' well-being and job satisfaction is highlighted by empirical studies done in China's vocational institutions. In a survey of Chinese teachers at vocational colleges, Postiglione and Tang (2019) discovered that changes in class sizes, curriculum revisions, and added administrative responsibilities all contributed to higher stress levels. The study made a point of highlighting the increased levels of burnout and poor job satisfaction experienced by teachers with considerable workload variability. Similar to this, Han et al. (2020) investigated how workload variability and teacher well-being related in vocational colleges. Their research showed that teachers who experienced sudden changes in their teaching assignments had more emotional tiredness and lower levels of engagement.

In a long-term study, Cattaneo et al. (2022) looked at how changes in workload affected the employment outcomes of teachers in vocational colleges. According to the study, prolonged exposure to high workload variance was linked to higher job burnout and poorer job performance. These results highlight the significance of addressing workload variation in order to improve instructors' wellbeing and productivity at China's vocational institutions.

Additionally, Nurtanto et al. (2021) research probed the precise facets of workload change that affect teachers' perceptions. According to the survey, teachers at vocational colleges found it particularly difficult to adapt to quick changes in curricula and the introduction of new teaching techniques. Teachers said they felt unprepared for the changes, which exacerbated stress and contributed to burnout. Collectively, these empirical investigations show how crucial workload variance is in determining instructors' experiences and wellbeing in the particular setting of China's vocational colleges.

2.2 Job Burnout among Higher Vocational College Teachers

In the context of China's educational system, empirical research has been conducted on the issue of job burnout among teachers in higher vocational colleges. Understanding the incidence and effects of burnout is crucial because these colleges are crucial in providing students with practical skills for their professions. The prevalence of burnout among teachers has been studied in China's vocational colleges. A thorough study carried out by Lu et al. (2022) revealed a high rate of burnout in this industry. According to their research, a sizeable percentage of teachers at technical colleges were moderately to severely burned out. Heavy workloads, poor professional development opportunities, and a lack of administrative support were all highlighted as major contributing factors to this job burnout.

Additionally, research has been done on how teacher burnout affects student results and educational quality. Corbin et al. (2019) looked at the complex link between student learning engagement and teacher burnout. Their findings suggested that teacher-student interactions and student satisfaction are severely impacted by fatigue, which has an impact on educational quality. This shows that treating burnout is crucial for maintaining effective and interesting learning environments as well as for the wellbeing of teachers. Teachers' experiences of burnout take on new, interesting dimensions in the setting of vocational education. Oliveira et al. (2021) analyzed burnout within the context of practical vocational subjects to delve into these intricacies. They discovered that specific burnout symptoms are a result of the practical, skills-training, and assessment aspects of vocational education. This emphasizes the necessity for customized treatments that take into account the unique needs and difficulties experienced by teachers in vocational colleges.

2.3 Job Resources in Higher Vocational Colleges

A key element in reducing the difficulties caused by workload variability and teacher burnout is the accessibility of employment resources at higher vocational colleges. The effectiveness of employment resources in boosting teachers' well-being and effective vocational education is revealed by empirical investigations carried out in China. The kinds of teaching resources that support instructors' resilience and job satisfaction have been studied in the context of China's higher vocational institutions. A study by Khaizer et al. (2018) showed that mentored instructors had lower burnout and increased job satisfaction. A defense mechanism against the damaging consequences of burnout, mentoring offered a forum for knowledge exchange, skill development, and emotional support.

Studies have also looked into the value of administrative assistance and participation in decision-making as workplace resources. A study by Huk et al. (2019) that looked at how instructors felt about administrative

support and its effects. According to their findings, burnout levels were lower among teachers who felt more administrative support. Similar to this, it has been discovered that teachers are empowered when they participate in decision-making processes, increasing their sense of control and job satisfaction. Resources mediated by technology have also drawn attention in vocational education. Alam et al. (2023) investigated how technology integration affected instructors' access to resources for their jobs. They discovered that technologically improved professional development possibilities, such as online courses and virtual collaboration platforms, significantly impacted teachers' capacity to adjust to shifting educational environments and manage workload changes. Furthermore, it is important to recognize the value of peer assistance as a professional resource. Liu and Zhang (2020) looked into how collegial ties can help reduce teacher burnout. Strong relationships with coworkers gave opportunities for collaboration, emotional support, and a sense of belonging, all of which helped to lower levels of burnout, according to their study.

2.4 Perceived Stress

The subjective evaluation of the demands made on people and their capacity to meet those demands is referred to as perceived stress. Empirical studies have looked at the relationships between workload variability and job burnout and instructors' feelings of stress in the context of vocational education. A study by Anees et al. (2021) examined how changes in workload affect teachers' perceptions of stress. According to their findings, larger levels of workload variance were linked to greater feelings of stress, which in turn affected levels of job satisfaction and burnout. This emphasizes the critical part workload management has in lowering instructors' perceived levels of stress.

Additionally, research have looked at the mediation function of workplace resources in the connection between perceived stress and job burnout. Yang et al. (2023) investigated the impact of perceived stress on burnout in connection to workplace resources including peer relationships and administrative support. According to their findings, occupational resources act as protective barriers against the damaging effects of perceived stress on burnout. Burnout was less common among teachers who felt they had access to more resources, highlighting the importance of creating welcoming work environments. Importantly, research have also looked into how stress perception affects how well teachers perform. Yin et al. (2020) investigated the impact of instructors' perceptions of stress on their teaching practices and student outcomes. They discovered that low levels of perceived stress were linked to lower student engagement and teacher efficiency. This emphasizes the necessity for tactics that deal with stress perception in order to guarantee the best possible teaching quality.

3.0 Methodology

Using carefully selected keywords like "workload variation," "job burnout," "job resources," "teachers," and "higher vocational colleges," useful information was obtained from online databases, scholarly journals, and relevant archives. The search was restricted to empirical research done over the last ten years in China's vocational education sector. To ensure quality and relevance, the selection criteria for the identified studies were created. Studies were considered if they particularly looked at the connection between workload variance, job burnout, and job resources among teachers at higher vocational institutions. Studies that weren't empirical or didn't have a clear focus on the mentioned variables were removed. The chosen studies were trustworthy and directly related to the goals of the study according to the rigorous screening process.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Workload Variation in Teaching Tasks

The studies carried out in China's higher vocational institutions provided insight into the notable differences in the workload of teachers. Teachers frequently had to deal with varying class sizes, many courses to teach, and changes in the demands of the curriculum, according to research by Diao and Hu (2022) teachers' overall job happiness and well-being are impacted by these changes, which increase their sense of unpredictability and stress levels. According to Li et al. (2023) such workload variations make it difficult to maintain constant teaching quality and student engagement. These results highlight how crucial it is to handle workload fluctuation in order to foster a positive teaching atmosphere and avoid burnout.

4.2 Job Burnout among Higher Vocational College Teachers

According to empirical data from research done in the context of China's vocational education, job burnout among teachers is a worryingly common occurrence. Higher levels of emotional weariness, cynicism, and decreased personal performance were found among professors in higher vocational institutions, according to Lu et al. (2022). They pointed out that the vocational education environment adds special pressures that can cause burnout due to its practical and skill-based emphasis. This is in line with the findings of Yang et al. (2021), who highlighted the additional stress of managing administrative requirements with industry-relevant education. These studies highlight the urgent requirement for focused interventions to reduce job burnout and improve teacher wellbeing at technical colleges.

4.3 Job Resources in Higher Vocational Colleges

Higher vocational colleges in China have performed empirical research that stresses the importance of workplace resources in reducing the negative effects of workload variance and job burnout. According to Gamage et al. (2021) teachers' capacity to manage workload difficulties was favorably impacted by their access to mentoring, professional development opportunities, and support from colleagues. Similar findings from Blackley et al. (2021) showed that collaborative teaching efforts and decision-making procedures increased teachers' feelings of control and decreased fatigue. These results underline how crucial it is to offer thorough employment resources in order to promote teacher resilience and satisfaction in vocational education settings.

4.4 Perceived Stress

According to empirical research done in China's vocational colleges, workload variability, job burnout, and teachers' perceptions of stress are all strongly correlated. According to Zhang and Li's (2020) research, instructors who had more workload variance also displayed more signs of stress and burnout. Furthermore, Yang et al. (2023) found that having access to job resources protected employees' perceptions of stress from the damaging impacts of workload changes. The complex interactions between workload, burnout, and stress are highlighted by these findings, underscoring the necessity of comprehensive approaches to handle these interconnected problems.

These results highlight how important it is to address workload issues and improve workplace resources to lessen the negative impacts of burnout and stress on teachers in higher vocational colleges. The specific requirements and practical focus of the vocational education environment necessitate tailored interventions that support teacher well-being while maintaining successful instructional practices.

5.0 Conclusion

In order to improve teacher wellbeing, manage workload fluctuation, and lessen burnout, tailored interventions and regulatory changes are required, according to empirical studies carried out in China's higher vocational colleges. For the purpose of developing a resilient and effective teaching workforce, a comprehensive strategy that takes into account employment resources, workload issues, and the vocational education setting is necessary. This study adds to our understanding of the complexity that exist in vocational education and offers guidance for future research and practices that aim to increase teacher satisfaction and maintain high standards of instruction.

6.0 Recommendations

Optimizing class sizes, offering professional development, encouraging peer support, balancing practical instruction and administrative responsibilities, providing mental health resources, involving teachers in decision-making, implementing data-driven workload policies, promoting adaptability, fostering collaborative research, and ensuring long-term sustainability are some recommendations to improve vocational education based on empirical studies carried out in China's vocational colleges. Together, these actions can enhance teacher wellbeing and raise the standard of vocational education as a whole.

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