

Using Two-Factor Theory to Examine Teacher Turnover Intention – A Case of a Private University in Sichuan, China

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ABSTRACT

In China, teachers from private higher education institutions (HEIs) are showing an upward trend to leave the education sector. Teacher turnover has been a concern for educators and policymakers worldwide, and many countries are grappling with the loss of high-quality teachers. Based on the Two-Factor theory, this paper aims to examine teacher turnover intention using a quantitative research method with a small sample size of 62 lecturers. Results show that workload is positively related with teacher turnover intention while leadership support is negatively related with teacher turnover intention. Professional development is negatively related with teacher turnover intention, but the relationship is not very strong. The study contributes to enhancing teachers' career development and private higher education institution's development, which is in line with SDG4 which focuses on quality education.

Keywords: Teacher turnover intention, private higher education institutions (HEIs), SDG 4

1. Introduction

Teacher turnover refers to teachers leaving their existing educational setting (Nguyen et al. 2020) and has been the subject of ongoing research because of the consequences it has for students, educators, and policymakers. Significant research has shown how teacher turnover harms students' academic success, educational institutions' reputations, and the system's general viability (Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Scholarly interest in teaching as a unique profession has expanded across a number of disciplines, including pedagogy, psychology, and management. Prior studies mostly focused on documenting and understanding the teaching and learning processes with a focus on students, but more recently, issues regarding teachers' development,

assessment, training, retention, and turnover have come to light. Teacher turnover has been extensively studied in these areas (Maryam et al., 2021; Räsänen et al., 2020; Rajendran et al., 2020; Adnot et al., 2017), with a large portion of these studies focusing on improving teachers' quality of life (Jiang & Zhang, 2017; Toulabi et al., 2013). Current studies on teacher turnover have spent a lot of efforts exploring predictors of teacher turnover and many empirical studies have been conducted, which provide a solid practical foundation for this field. Except for empirical studies, there are also theorists devoting to understanding teacher turnover by using theories or models (Nguyen et al., 2020). The exponential increase of teacher turnover studies facilitates the establishment of theoretical frameworks, paving the way for further theoretical research on teacher turnover.

In this paper, teacher turnover is examined using the Two-Factor theory. Relationships among factors contributing to teacher turnover are examined by utilizing Two-Factor theory, which is categorised as motivators and hygiene factors. Using a quantitative method, this paper analyses teacher turnover intention in private higher education institutions (HEIs) in China, thus trying to understand teacher turnover in a different light.

The main issue highlighted in this paper is that recent research indicates a growing trend among teachers in private HEIs who consider leaving the educational sector, posing a significant threat to the overall teaching quality and advancement of HEIs in China (Zhao & Zhou, 2022). In China, private higher education institutions (HEIs) comprise 25% of all HEIs, with instructors in private HEIs constituting 20% of the total higher education teaching workforce (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2021). To address this challenge and retain qualified educators within private HEIs while alleviating the detrimental impacts of high teacher turnover rates, it is imperative to rigorously examine the factors contributing to teacher turnover, both from practical and theoretical standpoints. The term teacher is used popularly in China to refer to educators or lecturers in HEIs.

According to Toropova et al. (2021), job satisfaction is closely related to teachers' career decision, which indicates that lower job satisfaction indicates higher intention to leave the institution. In China's private HEIs, teachers expressed their dissatisfaction of their work, mainly from the lack of supportive leadership, mounting workload, and the absence of professional development opportunities (Xiaoli, 2022). Besides, as private HEIs are different from their public counterparts in nature, teachers from these institutions are not tenured and the stability of faculty is lower than public institution (Liu, 2020). Hence, research on the job satisfaction of teachers from private HEIs is imperative to understand teacher turnover.

High turnover rate among HEIs has attracted attention from scholars worldwide, as studies have revealed that teachers in HEIs are valuable assets for the society and the retention of teachers are beneficial not only to institutions themselves but also to the wider society (Tian & Lu, 2017). However, there is a dearth of studies on the turnover among HEIs teachers from China, especially from private HEIs (Dan et al., 2023). As private higher education in China has gained increasing popularity in recent years, turnover of teachers in these institutions should be given due attention. Besides, current studies of

teacher turnover mainly focus on a wide range of factors, which include individual, organisational, and social (Nguyen & Springer, 2021). While these studies show a comprehensive picture of teacher turnover, systematic research on factors contributing to teacher turnover is needed. Studies categorizing these factors are limited, therefore, analyzing teacher turnover and its related factors from a theoretical perspective helps understand this issue. Using the Two-Factor theory, this paper categorizes factors contributing to teacher turnover into two types, which are motivators and hygiene factors.

Hence, this paper sets out to study three objectives:

1. To determine the level of job satisfaction and turnover intention of teachers in China's private HEIs;
2. To examine the relationship between hygiene factors and teacher turnover intention in China's private HEIs;
3. To examine the relationship between motivators and teacher turnover intention in China's private HEIs.

2. Literature Review

This section presents a review of the theoretical framework pertaining to teacher turnover as examined in prior scholarly investigations. Furthermore, it expounds upon the Two-Factor Theory in the context of teacher turnover. Numerous scholarly inquiries into teacher turnover have scrutinized the factors affecting this phenomenon, with academics offering diverse perspectives on the exit behaviour of educators. Drawing from the Two-Factor Theory, this study categorises the factors impacting teacher turnover intention into hygienic factors and motivators.

2.1 Two-Factor Theory

The Two-Factor theory, formulated by Frederick Herzberg (1959) serves as a prevalent framework for elucidating workplace behaviour and decision-making patterns. Within this framework, two distinct categories of factors, motivators, and hygiene factors, operate independently. The former encompasses elements such as achievement, personal growth, and recognition, which are conducive to fostering job satisfaction. In contrast, the latter group pertains to factors that engender job dissatisfaction, including aspects like compensation, supervision, vacation policies, and the working environment (Herzberg, 1959). This theory has been extensively employed to investigate employee turnover

across diverse workplace settings, and its applications in management are manifold.

The application of the Two-Factor Theory to scrutinize teacher turnover within the educational domain is a notable endeavour. Within this context, HEIs are actively engaged in an exploration of the intricate factors that shape the decisions of professors to either remain in their roles or seek alternative employment. This quest aims to not only retain a cadre of high-calibre faculty members but also to ensure the sustained delivery of academic excellence. Research conducted in private HEIs in Malaysia has also revealed a strong association between certain pivotal factors, including workplace autonomy, job satisfaction, and remuneration, and the intentions of professors to consider departure (Subramaniam et al., 2015).

On the other hand, Rathakrishnan et al. (2016) reported that neither job security nor supervisor support wielded a substantial influence on lecturer turnover. In a parallel investigation centred on the elements impacting teacher satisfaction among exemplary educators in Malaysia, the significance of personal growth opportunities and effective supervisory relationships emerged as crucial determinants (Amzat et al., 2017). The outcomes of this investigation significantly diverge from those reported in Rathakrishnan's (2016) study, likely due to the varying geographical and institutional settings of the academic institutions under examination. Nevertheless, it is posited that the implementation of measures such as offering suitable incentives and granting increased autonomy to the teaching staff within Pakistan's higher education institutions can be instrumental in reducing the rate of teacher turnover (Khan et al., 2021).

In China's private HEIs, low salaries, limited professional development opportunities, and authoritarian leadership are found to predict teacher turnover (Zhang, 2021). As an essential part of HEIs, teachers play an important role not only in the institution but also in the wider society. College university students are the main force of the labour market, indicating the quality of education they received indirectly determine the development of different industries. In this sense, understanding teacher's turnover intention in HEIs from the perspective of Two-factor theory is significant in understanding this phenomenon.

2.2. Teacher Turnover Intention

As an issue that concerns academic institutions worldwide, teacher turnover has become the focal point

for researchers in different educational contexts, such as early childhood education, secondary education, tertiary education, and special education. Currently, perspectives for understanding teacher turnover involve teachers in rural and urban schools, teachers who teach special subjects such as STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), and teachers in private and public educational institutions.

Due to its size and prominence as the world's most populated nation, China has the largest higher education system, with more than 3,000 colleges and universities on the mainland as of 2021. While more than 44.3 million students are enrolled in these schools, only 240 million Chinese citizens have graduated high school (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022). Private institutions make over 25% of China's broad array of HEIs, which is the greatest global portion. However, it's important to keep in mind that private HEIs in China are very different from those in Europe and North America. There are currently 140 universities around the country on the list of Double First-Class Universities, a scheme intended to increase the visibility of elite universities in China. Notably, all of these higher education institutions (HEIs) are part of the public sector (People's Republic of China Ministry of Education, 2022). With the aim of advancing the sustainable growth of private HEIs in the nation, policymakers and educational leaders must work together to address the marginalised status of private HEIs in China. Recent years have witnessed the findings of numerous surveys conducted by researchers, which consistently indicate a growing exodus of educators from China's private HEIs or a strong inclination among them to exit the teaching profession. This trend is estimated to persist in the years ahead (Zhao & Zhou, 2022).

The paper uses turnover intention, as a proxy to study does not look into instances of teacher turnover which is a common and strongly supported method in the scholarly literature. This is mainly because examining actual turnover requires access to private personnel files, and meta-analyses have repeatedly confirmed that turnover intention is a key indicator of actual turnover. (Griffeth RW et al., 2021, 2000).

2.3 Hygiene Factors and Teacher Turnover Intention

Hygiene factors, in the context of employee satisfaction and motivation, refer to the basic elements that must be present in the work environment to prevent dissatisfaction (Amzat et al., 2017). These factors are essential for maintaining a minimum level of job satisfaction, but

they alone do not lead to high levels of motivation or engagement. In the realm of teaching, hygiene factors play a crucial role in determining teacher turnover rates. Hygiene factors in the education sector include factors such as pay, company policies, administrative policies, fringe benefits, physical working conditions, interpersonal relations, and job security (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). When these factors are lacking or subpar, teachers may become dissatisfied and more likely to consider leaving their positions (Rathakrishnan et al., 2016).

In HEIs, when teachers feel supported by effective leadership, they are more likely to feel valued, motivated, and engaged in their roles (Ford et al., 2019). On the other hand, a lack of supportive leadership can lead to feelings of frustration and isolation, contributing to dissatisfaction and an increased likelihood of seeking employment elsewhere. Similarly, student discipline policies and practices play a significant role in shaping the classroom atmosphere. In schools with well-established and consistent discipline measures, teachers can focus on teaching, and disruptions are minimized. However, an environment with persistent discipline issues can lead to teacher burnout and a sense of helplessness. Workload is another crucial factor affecting teacher turnover. When educators are overwhelmed with an excessive workload and lack sufficient time and resources to meet the demands of their profession, they may experience heightened stress levels and reduced job satisfaction. This could lead to a higher propensity to leave their positions in search of more manageable teaching environments.

Current studies also indicate that institution resources, including teaching materials, technology, and facilities, are essential for providing a conducive learning environment. Inadequate resources can hinder effective teaching practices and limit the ability of teachers to deliver high-quality instruction. When educators perceive their institutions as lacking the necessary resources to support their work, they may feel disheartened and more inclined to explore opportunities in other schools or educational settings. In this research, hygiene factors include four aspects, which are leadership support, student discipline, workload, and institution resources.

2.4 Motivators and Teacher Turnover Intention

According to the literature (Ghazi et al., 2013), motivators are crucial in understanding what drives teachers to either stay committed to their profession or seek opportunities elsewhere. Motivators, in the context of employee satisfaction, refer to factors that go beyond the basic job

requirements and are known to significantly increase job satisfaction and motivation. In the teaching profession, motivators include opportunities for professional growth and development, recognition for their efforts, work itself, a sense of achievement, and the ability to make a positive impact on students' lives. When teachers experience a strong presence of motivators in their work environment, they are more likely to feel fulfilled, engaged, and committed to their role as educators, leading to lower turnover rates. Conversely, if motivators are lacking, and teachers feel stagnant or unappreciated, they may become dissatisfied and more inclined to explore other career options or seek employment in educational settings that offer better opportunities for growth and personal fulfilment.

Motivators in this study include work itself and professional development. The nature of the work teachers engage in daily, including classroom instruction, lesson planning, and student interactions, significantly influences their job satisfaction and commitment to the profession. When teachers find their work meaningful, challenging, and aligned with their passion for education, they are more likely to experience higher job satisfaction and lower turnover rates. On the other hand, a lack of fulfilment in the daily tasks and feeling stagnant in their roles can lead to disengagement and increased turnover.

According to a study which focussed on new teachers (Perrone et al., 2019), professional development also plays a vital role in teacher turnover. Providing opportunities for continuous growth and learning allows teachers to enhance their skills, stay updated with modern educational practices, and feel supported in their career advancement. Institutions that prioritise and invest in comprehensive professional development programs tend to have more motivated and dedicated teachers who see the institution as invested in their success. In contrast, limited or insufficient professional development opportunities may leave teachers feeling undervalued and unprepared for the evolving demands of their profession, potentially leading them to seek other opportunities elsewhere.

3. Research Methodology

Quantitative research design is utilised to examine the level of job satisfaction, turnover intention and demographic factors which influence teacher turnover intention. To answer research objective 1, descriptive statistics is used, while for research objectives 2 and 3, correlation analysis is used in this study. To determine

the presence of a statistically significant relationship, correlational research is frequently used by researchers. This approach utilises a correlation coefficient to explain both the magnitude and direction of the connection between variables. In this study, a two-tailed Pearson's r test was employed to calculate Pearson's correlation coefficient and assess the linear association between the variables.

Being a pilot study, a total of 100 questionnaires were distributed to teachers in a private university in Sichuan, Province, China. However only 62 were usable to produce valid results. The use of a small sample size was necessary because this study serves as a preliminary pilot test for a larger research project which is in progress now. Purposive sampling was used in the participant selection process to ensure participation from all faculties in the university. Fourteen of the responders were men, and forty-eight were women. This demographic represents the real scenario of teachers in HEIs in China.

3.2 Instruments

A Likert scale questionnaire with five response points was utilized in this study, drawing upon the work of Toropova et al. (2021) and Harden et al. (2018). There are four separate sections in the questionnaire. Demographic questions, which includes age, gender, marital status and teaching experience, are covered in the first segment. The second section looks at questions about conditions connected to the work environment, covering leadership support, student discipline, workload, institutional resources, the nature of the work itself and chances for professional development. The third section consists of four questions designed to gauge job happiness, while the fourth section consists of inquiries into the likelihood of teacher turnover. Table 1 provides specifics about the instrument's dependability.

Table 1. Reliability test results (N=62)

Sub-constructs	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Leadership Support	3	0.904
Student Discipline	5	0.936
Workload	5	0.955
Institution resources	5	0.951
Work Itself	4	0.942
Professional Development	5	0.944
Job Satisfaction	4	0.912
Teacher Turnover Intention	5	0.945

Source: Authors

3.3 Data Collection

Data was gathered in this study using the social media platform WeChat. WeChat was used by the researcher to administer the questionnaire. A brief introduction detailing the goals of the study was given as an introduction in the questionnaire. Additionally, respondents were assured of the 10-minute time required to answer the questionnaire. Participants' anonymity was protected throughout the study in accordance with ethical guidelines.

3.4 Data Analysis

SPSS version 26 was used for the analysis of the survey's data. To evaluate the mean values of job satisfaction and teacher turnover intention, descriptive statistics were used. Following that, a Pearson correlation analysis was done to look at the relationships between turnover intention, motivators, and hygiene aspects.

4. Results

In this section, the findings of the study and data analysis are explained.

4.1 Respondents' Demographic Profile

As shown in Table 2, the demographic profile of the study participants includes seven different elements. Notably, there is a sizable majority of female teachers in the sample (77%), which is over three times more than the percentage of male teachers. Regarding the distribution of respondents by age, those 51 years and older make up the largest group (37%) of respondents. Additionally, 61% of the respondents said they were parents, and half of the sample and have one child only. Lecturers and assistant lecturers together account for half of the respondents. In terms of prior teaching experience, the majority (34%) has 4–8 years.

4.2 Teacher Job Satisfaction

The first research objective is to determine the level of job satisfaction and teacher turnover intention. Tables 3 and 4, respectively, provide a summary of the mean values for each item within the sections on work satisfaction and teacher turnover intention.

Results of mean scores can be categorised into three types, namely low (1.00 to 2.33), moderate (2.34 to

Table 2. Respondents' Demographic Profile (N=62)

No	Demographic factors	Category	Frequency(n)	Percentage(%)
1	Gender	Male	14	22.6
		Female	48	77.4
2	Age	≤ 30	21	33.9
		31–40	10	16.1
		41–50	8	12.9
		≥ 51	23	37.1
3	Marital status	Single	8	12.9
		Married	54	87.1
4	Children	Have	38	61.3
		Don't have	24	38.7
5	No. of children	0	24	38.7
		1	31	50.0
		2	6	9.7
		3	1	1.6
6	Title	Assistant lecturer	25	40.3
		Lecturer	25	40.3
		Associate professor	9	14.5
		Professor	3	4.8
7	Teaching experience	≤ 3 years	11	17.7
		4–8 years	21	33.9
		9–15 years	19	30.6
		16–25 years	5	8.1
		≥26 years	6	9.7

Source: Authors

Table 3. Results of Teacher Job Satisfaction (N=62)

Items	Mean
1. My current work situation is not a major source of frustration in my life.	3.55
2. Overall, I am satisfied in my current practice.	3.50
3. Overall, I am pleased with my work.	3.45
4. My work in this practice has met my expectations.	3.35

Source: Authors

Table 4. Results of Teacher Turnover Intention (N=62)

Items	Mean
1. It is likely that I will be working for this university/college this time next year.	3.60
2. I will be working at this university/college 5 years from now.	3.56
3. I will be working for this university/college till I retire.	3.56
4. I will be working at this university/college 2 years from now.	3.55
5. I will be working for this university/college until I get another job.	3.44

Source: Authors

3.67) and high (3.68 to 5.00) (Thahira Bibi TKM Thangal, 2023). It is noteworthy that using a Likert scale with five points, greater values are associated with higher levels of job satisfaction. According to the study's findings, teachers' level of job satisfaction is in the moderate category.

4.3 Teacher Turnover Intention

In this section, higher mean scores indicate a larger level of turnover intention since the items measuring turnover intention are worded in terms of the intent to remain. According to the study's results, the majority of instructors plan to stay on the job for only at least another year. Notably, Item 5 has the lowest mean score, which is in the moderate to high range, shows that more than half of the teachers intend to stay in their current jobs until they find another job opportunity.

4.4 Hygiene Factors and Teacher Turnover Intention

To examine the relationship between hygiene factors and teacher turnover intention in China's private HEIs, Pearson Correlation is used and the results are showed below.

Table 5. Relationship between Hygiene Factors and Teacher Turnover Intention (N=62)

	Turnover intention			
	leadership support	student discipline	workload	institution resources
Pearson Correlation	-0.536**	0.055	0.549**	-0.022
Sig.(2-tailed)	0.000	0.671	0.000	0.863

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Authors

Results of this study show that among the four hygiene factors, leadership support and workload are significantly related with teacher turnover intention, with workload positively related with teacher turnover intention and leadership support negatively related with teacher turnover intention. According to Patrick Schober et al. (2018), coefficient between 0.40–0.69 is considered moderate correlation. Hence the relationship between leadership support, workload and turnover intention are moderate in this study. As for the relationships between student discipline and turnover intention, institution resources and turnover intention are negligible and not statistically significant.

4.5 Motivators and Teacher Turnover Intention

To examine the relationship between motivators and teacher turnover intention in China's private HEIs, Pearson Correlation is used and the results are showed below.

Table 6. Relationship between Motivators and Teacher Turnover Intention(N=62)

	Turnover intention	
	work itself	professional development
Pearson Correlation	0.249	-.370**
Sig.(2-tailed)	0.051	0.003

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Authors

Results of the analysis show that professional development is significantly related with teacher turnover intention, with more professional development opportunities indicating lower turnover intention(Räsänen et al., 2020). However, the relationship is weak (-.370). The relationship between work itself and teacher turnover intention is also weak (0.249) and has no statistical significance.

5. Discussion

5.1 Teacher Job Satisfaction

Results of the level of teacher job satisfaction show that teachers feel only a moderate level of satisfaction with their work and current practice. Teacher job satisfaction refers to the sense of fulfilment and gratification that teachers derive from working (Tsai & Antoniou, 2021). It is a positive emotional state that can help increase teachers' commitment and engagement to work, leading to a reduced likelihood to move to other organisations. However, results show that there is still room for improvement in terms of teacher's job satisfaction. The

well-being of teachers and the effective functioning of schools have both been empirically linked to teacher job satisfaction. Educators who manifest contentment in their roles tend to exhibit elevated levels of motivation, enthusiasm, and unwavering commitment to the institutional objectives. Moreover, those who express job satisfaction are notably less inclined to pursue alternative career paths or exit the teaching profession when compared to their dissatisfied counterparts(Toropova, 2021). Additionally, contented teachers evince a decrease in absenteeism, an augmentation of self-efficacy, and an improvement in their overall mental well-being.

5.2 Teacher Turnover Intention

The study's findings, which are consistent with those of earlier studies (Kang, 2023), show a modest degree of teacher turnover intention, indicating that the problem of teacher turnover in private higher education institutions (HEIs) has become a growing source of worry. The unfavourable working conditions and low job satisfaction that educators in this field feel are probably to account for this tendency. In-depth research on the importance of working conditions for academic professionals in HEIs has shown the crucial role that a supportive work environment plays in attracting and keeping teachers in these organisations. Enhancing teachers' job happiness may also have a negative effect on their decisions to leave, according to research on teacher turnover (Saiti & Papadopoulou, 2015). The intention of instructors to leave their professions within a year is relatively high in the context of this study. The improvement of working conditions and job satisfaction for educators within private HEIs in China must therefore be given top priority.

5.3 Hygiene Factors and Teacher Turnover Intention

Leadership Support

Based on previous research, successful school leadership incorporates a diverse array of tactics aimed at maintaining high levels of teacher satisfaction. These tactics encompass responsibilities such as aligning teachers with suitable grade levels and subject assignments, establishing dedicated time slots for collective planning, fostering robust social and interpersonal trust, promoting collaborative efforts among teachers, actively engaging teachers in the recruitment process, and facilitating the integration of new educators (Scallon et al., 2023). Furthermore, effective leadership extends support in addressing disciplinary matters, includes teachers in decision-making related to budgeting, discipline,

and curriculum development, and offers constructive feedback and recognition.

Results of this study show that leadership support is negatively related with teacher turnover intention, meaning that the more support teachers received from the leadership, the less they are likely to leave their institution. This is supported by findings from previous study, which also emphasizes the importance of leadership support (Balu et al., 2010). In a study that investigated teacher job satisfaction and turnover intention among English teachers, researchers found that job satisfaction appears to be significantly influenced by the effectiveness of leadership and teacher collaboration (Lopes & Oliveira, 2020). Another recent study also has indicated the importance of distributed leadership on teacher turnover (Keeley, 2021), which provides reference for HEIs in China about how to enhance effective leadership.

Student Discipline

As the main subject of schools and HEIs, students play an essential part in the process of learning and teaching. Students and teachers alike may suffer from student disciplinary issues that occur in the classroom setting. Teachers frequently view student misbehaviour as an especially distressing component, which can cause significant work-related stress for educators managing disciplinary difficulties in classrooms (Jensen, 2021). However, in this study, student discipline is found to be negligible in regard to teacher turnover intention. This is not surprising as the context of this study is higher learning education. Compared to teachers in primary or middle schools, teachers from HEIs are freer of student behaviour as their students are adults, most of them behave themselves in classroom. In China's education system, teachers are held more accountable for students' academic performance, which is closely related to their performance appraisal (James & Wyckoff, 2020). Therefore, teachers in these schools tend to regulate students with more strict classrooms to achieve good learning outcomes. This is different in HEIs, where teachers are mainly appraised based on their academic work and curriculum projects.

Workload

These results are in line with previous studies, which also show that more workload (Torres, 2016) predicts higher turnover intention. When educators have limited time to manage their responsibilities, they may struggle to maintain a healthy work-life balance, leading to feelings of dissatisfaction with their careers (Song et al., 2011). Besides, a consistently demanding workload with little

relief or recognition can create a sense of undervaluation, prompting teachers to consider seeking opportunities in schools or districts that offer better work conditions and support. Therefore, private HEIs are supposed to reduce workload for teachers to reduce turnover.

As China's private HEIs focus more on teaching compared with public HEIs, teachers are required to shoulder bulky teaching tasks (Wronowski & Urick, 2019). This means that they must complete academic work while achieving teaching goals. Therefore, it is imperative that policymakers take measures to reduce teacher workload in private HEIs in China, thus helping decrease teachers' feeling of dissatisfaction.

Institution Resources

Institution resources can include modern technologies, classroom and office facilities, libraries and others that can facilitate teaching and learning (Cotton, John L. and Tuttle, 1986). However, limited studies have investigated the relationship between institution resources and teachers' decision to leave. The results of this study found that the relationship between these two variables is weak, meaning that teachers from private HEIs attach little importance to the facilities or resources during their teaching. This is different from previous studies, which show that institution resources such as financial support for teachers are related to teacher attrition (Imazeki, 2005). The divergence of results show that institution resources still need to be studied in terms of its effect on teacher turnover, as teaching quality largely depends on resources a teacher have.

5.4 Motivators and Teacher Turnover Intention

Professional Development

These results partially support previous studies, which reveal that more professional development opportunities will lead to lower intention to leave (Räsänen et al., 2020). When teachers have access to continuous learning opportunities, they feel supported in their career advancement and better equipped to handle the evolving challenges in education. Institutions that invest in comprehensive professional development programs tend to have higher teacher retention rates, as teachers feel valued and are more likely to stay committed to an institution that fosters their professional growth (Li & Yao, 2022). Conversely, a lack of opportunities for growth and limited professional development can lead to stagnation, reduced job satisfaction, and ultimately, a higher likelihood of teachers seeking new opportunities elsewhere.

Work Itself

According to Two-Factor theory, work itself also refers to the nature of work, which can be how challenging their work is (Herzberg, 1959). For employees who have intrinsic motivation for their work, they are more likely to take on challenges at work and may feel distressed when the work is drudgery. Results of this study show that there is a weak relationship between work itself and teacher turnover intention, which is conflicting to the findings of another study. In the study that investigates employee's motivation, it was found that employees who tend to choose high-demanding work have more intrinsic motivation, and they are less likely to leave once they feel the nature of work match his or her expectation (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). In the context of HEIs, teachers are expected to adopt more creative pedagogies, making teaching more challenging than before. Therefore, it is necessary to further investigate the effect of work itself on teacher turnover intention using larger sample size or sample from different cultures.

6. Conclusion and Implications

This paper focuses on teacher turnover in private HEIs in China, which is the largest in the world in terms of the number of teachers and students. Findings show that hygiene factors (leadership and workload) and motivator (professional development) are related to teachers' decision to leave the profession. According to the Two-Factor theory, the absence of hygiene factors will lead to job dissatisfaction and increase the likelihood of turnover; while the lack of motivators will lead to low job satisfaction, thus lower job performance (Rathakrishnan et al., 2016). As the lack of both sets of the factors will give rise to adverse effect, institution management and education policy makers are supposed to give due attention to ensure motivators and hygiene factors. With effective and supportive leadership, reasonable workload, and more professional development opportunities, teachers in private HEIs will feel more satisfied with their job and less likely to exit.

The management of China's HEIs and policymakers will benefit greatly from this research. In China, private HEIs are becoming more well-known among both the higher education community and the public. Educators and policymakers should actively work to mitigate teacher turnover and retain competent educators by prioritising the improvement of working conditions and the promotion of teacher job satisfaction (Xiong et al., 2023). Therefore, this initiative has the potential to raise educational standards and support the long-term growth of private HEIs.

However, limitations of this study should be explained so that further studies can be conducted to improve research on teacher turnover intention. As this was a pilot study, the sample size was small, which makes it difficult to generalise the results. To assess teacher turnover intention, this study uses a quantitative methodology with closed-ended questions. Future studies are suggested to be done using a larger sample size. Besides, qualitative or mixed methods are encouraged to study teacher turnover intention.

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Declaration of Competing Interests

No competing financial or personal interests exist in reporting the results of the study.

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