

Systematic Literature Review on the Influence of University Leader Support and Professionalism Towards Academic Staff Well-being in China

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This study aspires to formulate a model elucidating the impact of leader support on the well-being of Chinese university academic staff through prism of professionalism, which identifies the pertinent theories regarding four variables and summarizes the research findings on leader support, professionalism, and academic staff well-being. A theoretical framework that explains the interrelationships of the variables in this study has been developed based on the discussion. This study finds that: Leader support has significant relationship with professionalism. Furthermore, the study of leader support has revealed the importance of considering various dimensions, such as work-family issues, in assessing the impact of leader support on employees; The existing literature provides valuable insights into the impact of leader support on teacher well-being, but there is a clear call for more focused research to address the specific dynamics within academic settings. Research on the connection between academic staff well-being and leader support is scarce in Chinese universities; Professionalism and well-being are significant but are only now starting to be recognised in higher education. Furthermore, these insights underscore the need for institutions to prioritize the understanding and promotion of professionalism to support the well-being of academic staff; These earlier research has demonstrated that professionalism can act as a mediating factor. Regarding the current study, the importance of teachers' individual attitudes and their impact on traits like leadership and work satisfaction led to the use of their professionalism as a mediator. Additionally, there hasn't been any empirical research done on the role that teachers' professionalism plays as a mediator between the relationship between teacher well-being and support from leaders.

Key words: Leader Support, Professionalism, Academic Staff Well-Being

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Introduction

The Communist Party of China (CPC) has set the goal of building a strong nation in education by 2035, emphasizing that the majority of teachers should experience a sense of well-being in their positions and achieve career success. Xi Jinping has highlighted that higher education is the leader in developing a strong nation in education, and only excellent teachers can deliver high-quality education (Zhou 2023; Tang 2023). Meanwhile, academic staff in higher education institutions is the core force, playing a decisive role in ensuring the quality of higher education (Pham 2021). Only teachers who prioritize well-being can cultivate students with a similar focus on well-being (Li 2023). Additionally, the organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for the first time included the Teacher Professional Well-being Assessment as a significant component of PISA 2021. Therefore, teacher well-being has consistently been a key topic of educational research in China and around the world and academic staff working as teachers in higher education institutions should not be neglected.

Academic staff may lack well-being from specific workplace factors like high teaching loads, administrative duties, research pressures, a lack of institutional support, and the consequences of academic rankings and funding have an negative impact on academic staff well-being (Dlamini & Dlamini 2024). Moreover, teaching resources, peer support, administrative support, and emotional job demands, such as maintaining relationships with colleagues and students, can increase their well-being to some extent. Further, higher education institutions are facing major transformation challenges globally (Naidoo-Chetty & Plessis 2021) and academic staff encounter challenges to their well-being, especially with growing work demands (Xu et al. 2023). Therefore, workplace support is important to academic staff

well-being (Harun & Bahari 2023). Academic staff with well-being can take education work as the pursuit of their own life value, put themselves into education work with a positive and active attitude, and creatively exert their talents, so as to promote the healthy growth of students and cultivate useful talents for the country (Sun limei 2021). The role of leaders in academic setting is highly important as they can influence the overall outcomes of the university, teachers' psychological well-being, and ultimately, the environment, in which students learn to build their futures (Horoub & Zargar 2022).

This study aspires to formulate a model elucidating the impact of leader support on the well-being of Chinese university academic staff through prism of professionalism. Employing a quantitative research design, a survey comprising questionnaires was administered to 400 university academic staffs across 5 Chinese universities in Shanxi Province. Subsequent data analysis will employ relation, regression, and structural equation modelling. Thus, this study seeks to scrutinize the influence of leader support and academic staff's professionalism on academic staff well-being in Chinese universities, contributing not only to the cultivation of proficient and well-being of academic staff but also to the development of adept students and the advancement of high-quality higher education.

Systematic Review

This study aims to research the influence of university leader support and professionalism on academic staff well-being in the Chinese university. This study also confirms the assumption that professionalism is regarded as a mediator between the relationship of leader support and academic staff well-being. In sum, this chapter presents a review of the literature in seven main sections for the study. The first section presents a review of the context in Chinese higher education. The second section to the sixth section delivers the definition and development of leader support, professionalism, and academic staff well-being, empirical studies based on demographic factors, and the relationships between them are also included. The seventh section presents the underpinning theory of this study and proposes the theory framework of the research.

Numerous studies have existed that have found that transformational leadership style can have an impact on employee and subordinate job satisfaction, and numerous empirical studies have confirmed the influential relationship between transformational leadership style and satisfaction. However, for the education sector, improving teacher satisfaction through transformational leadership styles for principals needs to be further explored. Therefore, previous research related to transformational leadership style and satisfaction will be described and discussed to facilitate a clearer understanding of the two key factors of transformational leadership and satisfaction based on the previous research.

The influence of university leader support

Transformational leadership refers to a leader's ability to inspire followers to achieve self-transformation and guide organizational change to meet various challenges and grasp opportunities during a period of organizational change when the organization is undergoing a process of accomplishing established goals and meeting challenges (Iszatt-White and Saunders, 2020).

Leader Support

Leader support can be regarded as leadership behaviors that demonstrate empathy for subordinates and solicit their input on decisions and personal needs; these actions serve as a vital buffer against the detrimental effects that job demands, or work pressure, have on workers and enable the achievement of desired results (West et al. 2022). For another thing, it can be seen as a type of social support. Leaders as supervisors can influence employee's attitudes, expectations, and behavior (Kalliath et al. 2020). Research has proved support from supervisors can influence employees' emotional exhaustion, turnover intention, and job satisfaction (Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn 2021; Modaresnezhad et al. 2021; Heyns et al. 2021; Lee et al. 2022). There are several problems in leader support: First, the workplace in China can be an ideal context to demonstrate the impact of leader support on academic staff well-being. However, its impact on academic staff well-being in Chinese sociocultural contexts is still under-researched (Cao & Zhang 2022). Secondly, In the period of rapid development of higher education, university leaders have been entrusted with new missions and tasks. How should university leaders play their roles well? How should they better play their roles to support the development of teachers and realize the goals of schools? these problems need further study (Qi & Wang 2022). Finally, most studies focus on the intervention role of leader support (Wang et al. 2022).

Emotional Support from Leader

Emotional support involves the extent to which supervisors demonstrate sympathy, respect, and sensitivity (Chen & Zhang 2020). Leader emotional support refers to perceptions shared by members within workgroups and interacts with work engagement at the individual level in affecting job satisfaction (Pohl & Galletta 2017). Three subtypes of emotional support highlighted in the literature include (1) Listening support or listening without giving advice or being judgmental; (2) Emotional comfort or comforting workers and indicating that others care about their well-being; and (3) Emotional challenge or challenging workers to evaluate their own attitudes, values, and feelings (Haas 2020). Therefore, leader emotional support can be regarded as emotional support from the leader at work, which is one component of supportive working environments ('supportive structures') that enable employees to invest and unfold their own resources appropriately and even endure challenging and demanding tasks (Frenzel et al. 2023). Leaders ought to be sincere and caring, empathetic, and able to help staff members emotionally (Yue et al. 2021). ATIK and

CELIK (2020) thought subordinates will have higher levels of self-efficacy if their leader empowers them through emotional support with positive reinforcement, words of encouragement, and positive rewards. Moreover, supervisor incivility results in a negative relationship between employees and supervisor, reduced organizational commitment, employee turnover, and lower job satisfaction (Gray et al. 2020).

Instrumental Support from Leader

Instrumental support is another important category of support from the leader. Instrumental support refers to work-related behavioral support, including flexible scheduling (Chen & Zhang 2020). Instrumental support includes all tangible forms of support that we receive from others. Two subtypes of tangible support from leaders include (1) Material assistance or when leaders (via the organization) provide employees with safety products and (2) Personal assistance or when leaders give their time, skills, and knowledge, to help employees accomplish their tasks (Haas 2020). Therefore, leader instrumental support means all tangible support from the leader to complete tasks. It may include but is not limited to, when a leader allows time and resources to help subordinates complete the tasks that help them achieve a promotion (McGurk et al., 2014).

Informational Support from Leader

Informational support is also an important support from leaders for teachers. Informational support can be given to people as knowledge, guidance, suggestions, and proposals to assist them in resolving their issues (Sari & Setiawan 2020). The importance of leaders has been attributed in studies to their proximity to frontline employees and awareness of social dynamics in the workplace. Supervisors play a crucial role in the daily administration of work disability in organizations (Jetha et al. 2018). Further, informational support moderates the relationship between work-family conflict and well-being (Zakhem et al. 2022). Leaders are expected to offer information that primarily demonstrates a high level of concern for their well-being (physical and psychological) to minimize physical and emotional stress. (Tuzovic & Kabadayi 2020). Therefore, leaders help employees obtain and retain the information they need to work more effectively in the organization (Qiu et al. 2020). Leader informational support helps teachers clarify work goals, reduce confusion caused by uncertainty and anxiety at work, enhance self-confidence, and better feel well-being at work. Moreover, ERTÜRK (2022) demonstrated positive and significant relationships between supervisor informational support and teachers' job satisfaction and subjective well-being. However, due to too much information in the digital age, not all information is useful for teachers. Inappropriate information support can be a burden on teachers (Väisänen et al. 2017). Therefore, in this study, leader information support mainly focuses on information about teacher professional development, new technology demands about teaching and research, teaching evaluation, related funding from government or other organizations, and other work-related information.

Professionalism

Development of Professionalism

Professionalism influences the quality of education, reflects the level and qualification of work, and needs have certain competencies (Ramadhan 2021). Academic staff as university teacher whose professionalism is determined not only by macro-level definitions and decisions but also depends on how they experience their work and see themselves as professionals (Flores 2022). Therefore, professionalism has been described as a contested site (Sachs 2016) which depends on a lot of dynamic variables, such as political, professional, or contextual. Erss and Kalmus (2018) defined professionalism of teachers as the degree to which they can effectively handle and manage classroom teaching issues, provide high-quality instruction, and improve students' academic performance convincingly and professionally. Therefore, professionalism of academic staff can be regarded as academic staff's attitude to their profession and academic staff's competence to deal with matters related to their profession, it is a process and influenced by certain culture. Diverse viewpoints have been expressed and deliberated by various individuals concerning the nature of the teaching profession and the qualities that teachers must possess to fulfill it. According to Evetts (2011), there are two types of professionalism: organizational professionalism and occupational professionalism. Occupational professionalism is characterized by practitioners and self-demands accountability, whereas organizational professionalism is based on procedures, standardization, and performance reviews in hierarchical and authority structures.

Professional Knowledge

Academic staff as a university teacher whose professional knowledge is regarded as cognitive dispositions of competence are related to satisfy teachers' demands of profession (König et al. 2016; Krauss et al. 2020) and their attainment and development during teacher's whole career (Tröbst et al. 2018, 2019). Furthermore, Dickerson et al. (2022) proposed a Eraut-Shulman teacher knowledge framework, in which knowledge is not only care teacher, but also pay attention to teaching process; the framework includes content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational content. Researchers seem to show stronger interests in the evaluation of teacher knowledge and professional development programs to enhance teachers knowledge in higher education. Peiser et al. (2022) used mixed methods and studied student teachers' perceptions of the contribution of university research to the development of professional knowledge. The finding suggested attaching importance to initial teacher education curriculum development. Van Dijk et al. (2022) thought the professional development of university teachers should connect their disciplinary knowledge. They proposed a concept framework including adaptive expertise and practical knowledge

and support teacher development to connect disciplinary knowledge. Therefore, university teachers can attain their professional knowledge through professional development to satisfy teaching needs.

Autonomy

The ability of teachers to independently choose and determine their actions within the specific contextual framework of constraints in which they operate is known as teacher autonomy (Wermke & Höstfält 2014; Paulsrud & Wermke 2019). Teachers who want to grow in their careers and take on more responsibility find that teaching autonomy helps them feel empowered and own their work (Khan 2019). It is also regarded as a fundamental professional necessity and is directly linked to teachers' work engagement, emotional tiredness, and job motivation (Börü 2018 ; Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2020). Teachers' influence on organisational and pedagogical issues within the local context of their work is analysed at the level of collegial professional autonomy. Individual autonomy pertains to the ability of teachers to make decisions regarding their own education within the confines of the classroom. Furthermore, the idea of teaching autonomy is strongly tied to the larger social, cultural, and political contexts of various educational systems. Previous studies have also shown that country-specific variations exist in teaching autonomy. In China, teacher autonomy has become a new focus in the field of education. Lili (2020) used CiteSpace software performs visual analysis of data and analyzed high-frequency prominent words, concluded that the future development trend of this research field will focus on (1) Teacher autonomy in the big data information environment; (2) The relationship between teachers' subject teaching knowledge integrating technology and teacher autonomy; (3) Research on teacher autonomy of university English teachers under curriculum reform; (4) Teacher autonomy development research on ways to improve and strategies. Sen (2023) confirmed that university English teachers have a good foundation for independent development in China. Teachers' independent development requires their own efforts and also requires external support to achieve sustainable professional development. Therefore, in the information age teachers also need to focus on self-autonomy to realise sustainable professional development.

Responsibility

The professional responsibility of teachers has primarily been understood in terms of external obligations, primarily from an accountability perspective, in the international literature. However, social scientists seem to consistently distinguish between responsibility and accountability (Lee 2023). One way to conceptualise responsibility is as an internal commitment and obligation to produce or prevent specific outcomes, or to believe that these outcomes ought to have been produced or prevented (Lauermann & Karabenick 2011). Furthermore, responsibility can be viewed as a personal attribute or state that is acted out in various contexts, as well as an outcome-dependent construct in which one experiences varying degrees of responsibility based on the kinds of outcomes and positive or negative consequences (Holdorf & Greenwald 2018). As a result, the accountability mechanism and teachers' agency may have some influence over what they are held accountable for in addition to their own desires. In order to properly and optimally attract students' attention, interest, and activity in teaching and learning, professional teachers can fulfil their responsibilities with a full sense of responsibility combined with compassion for the students (Rahimah et al. 2021). According to Jedemark and Londos (2021), university instructors handle the assessment process primarily on their own as part of their professional obligation, which is predicated on their confidence in the professional agent. Furthermore, accepting responsibility means being prepared to suffer from guilt and other negative effects as well as being willing to accept responsibility after an error or setback occurs (Sheldon et al. 2018). Therefore, internal willingness to take action regardless of the outcome—positive or negative—and the fact that responsibility is not entirely determined by external accountability mechanisms and their agency have been ingrained in the definition of responsibility.

Commitment

Professional commitment referred as the sense of dedication that members of a group have for their own work and a person's perspective on his or her profession (Bashir, 2017; Siraneh et al. 2018). Meantime, having the status of a professional, and thus being committed to the profession, is also seen as an important mechanism for developing appropriate professional qualifications and skills (Myklebust 2020). Therefore, professional commitment among academic staff refers to their dedication and psychological attachment to their chose career, reflecting their integration with the values and norms of the profession, involvement in its development, and loyalty to the profession's membership (Arviv Elyashiv & Rozenberg, 2024). In sum, a teacher's dedication to the teaching profession and educational practise is referred to as their professional commitment. Strong professional commitment is demonstrated by teachers who participate in teaching activities, clearly define their professional objectives and values, and demonstrate their commitment to staying in the teaching field. Their reasons for teaching, professional engagement, planned effort, aspirations for career development, satisfaction with their career choice, sense of efficacy, and personal values are all strongly correlated with their professional commitment. Therefore, academic staff's commitment includes commitment to subject, to student, to the profession, and to their institutions (Ibrahim & Aljneibi, 2022).

Academic Staff Well-Being

Physical Well-Being

Research about physical well-being mainly related to immune system responses, cardiovascular health, stress reduction, and decreased fatigue (Macías-Velasquez et al. 2021). According to Kwon et al (2021) research,

ergonomic pain related to work (66 percent), headaches (55 percent), and urinary tract infections are the most common causes of concern for physical well-being, which also includes self-care behaviours and any underlying health issues (33 percent). Out of the nine health condition indicators (e.g., headache, urinary tract infection, high blood pressure, asthma), teachers in the sample generally reported having two health-related issues. Early childhood educators conducted a study by Randall et al. (2021) to examine the connection between physical activity, physical and psychological well-being, and life satisfaction. Physical well-being in this study is defined as total health status, physical activity, days/hours spent exercising, hours spent sitting, and ergonomics. Studies have demonstrated that physical health not only has a direct impact on life satisfaction, but also indirectly influences it through physical activity.

Research has suggested that better physical health enables employees to effectively manage work demands, experience fewer physical symptoms, and have a greater sense of well-being (Yunus et al. 2024). Moreover, WHO also emphasizes the importance of a healthy working environment for staff well-being (Thanh & Anh 2023). Meantime, physical well-being among academic staff encompass regular exercise, absence of health issues, and a wellness-focused lifestyle, all of which significantly impact academic success (Khatri et al., 2024). Therefore, in this study, physical well-being includes work-related psychosomatic symptoms and frequency of psychosomatic symptoms.

Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being is associated with contentment with one's life, career, and mental and physical health, as well as an assessment of one's level of happiness in life (Garg & Rastogi 2009). There is a large body of evidence supporting the significance of psychological well-being in the workplace today (Park & Peterson 2019). Prior studies have demonstrated a strong correlation between employee well-being and physical health and high performance, as well as a number of other organizational outcomes, such as customer satisfaction, profitability, and employee turnover (Krekel et al. 2019). Using Ryff and Keyes' psychological model of well-being, Gast et al. (2022) conducted a Dutch study on ten university professors. The findings showed that various learning activities had unique relationships with various aspects of well-being. Research has indicated that workers who possess a high degree of psychological well-being tend to perform better than those who have a lower emotional level (Lohmann et al. 2019). As a result, teachers' psychological health may be a good indicator of their knowledge management, self-efficacy, and work engagement (Greenier et al. 2021; Kim 2021).

Social Well-Being

Social well-being refers to the appraisal of one's circumstances and function society. Since Seligman proposed the positive psychology in 1998, a great deal of research has been done on well-being, especially on personal research on subjective well-being and psychological well-being from a personal perspective. However, studying well-being only from an individual perspective is obviously not comprehensive enough. To comprehensively interpret the concept of well-being, we must also understand the social relationships and social characteristics of individuals, that is, conduct research from the social level. Drawing on philosophy, social psychology theory, and cultural analysis, he extracted five dimensions of social well-being that represent an individual's: (1) integration; (2) acceptance; (3) perceived contribution; (4) actualization; and (5) perceived coherence. Kazemi (2017) provided a comprehensive analysis of social well-being in the workplace based on Keyes' theory. Integration, acceptance, contribution, actualization, and coherence were the dimensions. Beyond the variation explained by life satisfaction and positive and negative affect, occupational social well-being also accounted for additional variation in work-related stress, overall job satisfaction, and organisational commitment. These results emphasize the significance of taking into account social well-being indicators specific to a given domain when trying to explain a variety of employee outcomes. Additionally, when assessing and managing social well-being at work, it is important to take into account the workplace characteristics suggested by Colenberg et al. (2020). Social well-being is made up of elements of both short- and long-term hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. Consequently, the development and upkeep of significant interpersonal relationships within the workplace is referred to as social well-being. It will help you feel sincere and valued in addition to providing you with a sense of connection and belonging.

Career Satisfaction

The definition of teacher career satisfaction is a pleasant or upbeat emotional state brought on by their assessment of their work experience (Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2011; Kapa & Gimbert 2018). According to Toropova et al. (2021), teacher career satisfaction is the subjective assessment of teachers' worth that arises from the discrepancy between what they expected and what they actually received from their jobs (i.e., opportunities for professional growth, benefits, and working conditions). Through a survey of 522 primary and secondary school teachers in mainland China, Yao and Ma (2024) claimed that distributed leadership could have a significant positive impact on teacher career satisfaction in the context of Chinese culture.

All things considered, career satisfaction is a person's assessment of workplace elements in relation to their own objectives, aspirations, and successes. It is a crucial component of professional success. One of the things that makes a university teacher's career satisfying is their involvement in teaching, research, and service. A sense of belonging in the workplace and faculty members' perceptions of their worth, respect, and recognition (such as awards and competitive pay) from their peers and organisation are significant factors in job satisfaction. Furthermore, faculty members felt that having a strong degree of autonomy (Obrad 2020), being in charge of their professional

development (Devotto 2020), and enjoying challenges at work (Chen 2021) were important aspects that contributed to their sense of career satisfaction. Therefore, an individual's feelings and perceived evaluations of their career-related accomplishments are referred to as career satisfaction in this study (McKenna et al. 2016). Academic career satisfaction is a subjective psychological feeling that arises from an educator's overall emotional assessment and inner experience of their work.

EMPRICAL STUDIES BASED ON DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Leader Support Differences Based on Gender

There are some research that have noticed the leader support according to the gender. For instance, Daraba et al. (2021) found that females tend to expect support from leaders to secure and restore their psychological resources. Moreover, Cotterill et al. (2020) explored a study on pharmacists proved that perceived supervisor support of male pharmacists was also higher than that of female pharmacists in China's primary healthcare institutions. Under the influence of China's organizational environment, male pharmacists may focus more on the views and support of their leaders to realize their sense of self-worth and self-achievement. Moreover, Wang Fuyi (2020) found that the overall situation of social support for physical education teachers in rural middle schools is better for women than for male, which may be related to the gender difference between men and women, women seek help from the outside world in most cases when they encounter difficulties, and tend to actively seek external resources to solve problems, so they can feel more social support, while men are more inclined to complete the work immediately due to specific gender role reasons, so they make less use of the social support around them, so on the whole, female physical education teachers are generally better than male physical education teachers in social support.

Professionalism Differences Based on Gender

Another special reason to include gender in the sphere of education is the feminization of the teaching workforce (Heinz et al. 2023; Moreau 2019; OECD 2022). The accuracy of the development of professional teachers was related to gender, that men perceive themselves to be higher in the developing professional teacher than women (Tambak et al. 2021). The cultural dimension of professional teaching practices includes a performance-oriented organizational climate, while the gender dimension highlights intra-sex competition. These factors together highlight the significance of professional competence for teachers' careers and highlight the insufficiency of professional capital among participants (Hou et al. 2023). Moreover, in academia, the exploration of professionalism based on gender reveals significant disparities influenced by socially constructed differences and gender stereotypes (Ambrosio 2018; Lima et al. 2024). Naseer (2018) revealed a significant difference in beliefs of male and female teachers about professionalism, commitment, competence, professional ethics and accountability, where female teachers had stronger beliefs. Studies (2022) also showed that female EFL instructors had a higher level of professionalism and commitment than their male counterparts. In summary, the research provides proofs about the gender-based expectations and disparities in career and professional life in academic staff, shedding light on the challenges faced by female professionals and the impact of gender stereotypes on academic careers.

Academic Staff Well-Being Differences Based on Gender

It was found that there are varying effects on different dimensions of academic staff well-being based on gender. Tafese Keltu (2024) indicated that there was no significant gender difference in job satisfaction. Consistent with some prior findings in samples of practitioners gender differences in burnout were non-significant. Kabunga (2020) further supported that there was no evidence of gender differences in the levels of burnout in their studies on teaching professionals. Moreover, Blanchflower and Bryson (2024) revisit the issue estimating gender differences across 55 subjective well-being metrics and found women score more highly than men on all negative affect measures and lower than men on all but three positive affect metrics, confirming a gender well-being gap. Women say they are less cheerful and calm, more depressed, and lonely, but happier and more satisfied with their lives, than men. Alves et al. (2020) thought that the gender variable was a predictor of professional well-being, in a positive perspective, indicating that female teachers are more satisfied professionally than their male colleagues. However, Gordon and Presseau (2022) found that The Canadian women reported worse mental health than men, though surprisingly this gender difference was not seen in Australia. In China, research outcomes on academic staff well-being differences based gender are also nonconformity. Zhu et al. (2016) found that compared with female teachers, male teachers generally believe that academic research is very stressful, and they are not very satisfied with the housing conditions of the school. Female teachers, on the other hand, are generally satisfied with the social status of university teachers, and feel that they can maintain sincere cooperation with each other and that they can get help from their leaders when they encounter problems in their work.

Leader Support Differences Based on Age

Research has shown that there are significant differences in the type and extent of leadership support that teachers of different ages received. Meyers et al. (2020) thought younger workers will benefit more from perceived organizational support for strength use in terms of increased levels of work engagement than older workers based on the literature on lifespan (personality) developmental and aging at work.

Niu (2024) indicated that the older teachers experienced more challenges than younger teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. 'Compared to the older teachers, the younger teachers' learning was centered around adjusting pedagogical techniques to meet the unique demands of online teaching in a pandemic context to ensure student engagement and manage their own well-being amidst global uncertainty. educational leaders can identify the needs of subgroups of

teachers and help schools and districts understand their unique needs in workplace learning. Jacinta (2020) found that disagreements arise between ranked senior academics and newer younger academics during team-teaching assignments because of age differences. Vogel and Alsliman (2018) suggested that FALs' agency was frequently curtailed by the lack of fiscal resources. Due to lack of top leadership support senior academics are likely to resist changing teaching methods, causing predictable tension between them and the younger academics.

Professionalism Differences Based on Age

The research articles have provided insights into the relationship between age and professionalism. Abou Arraj (2018) shows that there is an inverse relationship between the age and the recruitment procedures as well as between the age and the attendance of training sessions. Meaning that as age increases, the number of training sessions decrease, and as age increases, employees who think that rules should be bent to allow relative appointment decrease. Furthermore, concluded that the hypothesis that as age increases, professionalism increases also does not hold. It seems that the level of professionalism is independent of age. So, recruiting younger employees will not improve professionalism. However, an America study observed that the perception of professionalism varied most with the level of age (Alharbi et al. 2023). Moreover, the impact of age on research activities in academia was highlighted, with younger academics potentially facing disadvantages compared to their older counterparts (Baumann 2022). Further, research suggests that older teachers are less likely to leave the profession, indicating a positive association between age and staying in the profession (Gundlach et al. 2024). Research also proved teachers with more autonomy are more likely to intent to stay in the profession, while older teachers may experience reduced autonomy due to factors such as standardized curriculum and assessment (Gundlach et al. 2024; Ping et al. 2024).

In sum, the definition of professionalism varies across generations, with younger generations being evaluated based on different beliefs and values compared to older generations (Belfi et al. 2024).

Academic Staff Well-Being Differences Based on Age

Regarding age, Syrek et al. (2022) assume that restrictions on social gatherings (such as meeting friends, going to clubs or concerts) might affect younger employees more strongly than older employees because of their recreational habits, more active lifestyles or cramped housing situations. This assumption is supported by findings in an Austrian sample, indicating that the coronavirus pandemic and the lockdown are particularly stressful for younger adults (Pieh et al. 2020). Additionally, as medical studies suggest that morbidity rates and the risk of a severe course of the pandemic increase with age (Zhou et al. 2020), social restrictions and changes in the manner of working might be more likely to be perceived as unnecessary by younger compared to older employees. Furthermore, building on a study by Akkermans et al. (2020) one could speculate that the pandemic may be a career shock for younger employees at the beginning of their working life. Taken together, we expect that younger employees experienced a stronger decrease in well-being compared to older employees.

Professional Titles

According to The Higher Education Law, the professional ranks of teachers in Chinese colleges and universities are clearly classified, from primary to advanced teaching assistants, lecturers, associate professors and professors. This classification system not only reflects the ability and contribution of teachers in teaching and scientific research, but also provides a clear path for teachers' career development and promotion.

Leader Support Differences Based on Academic Staff Professional Titles

Evidence had proved that leaders in educational institutions can develop transformational roles, guiding ongoing changes and empowering professionals and institutions (de Jong et al. 2022). Supportive leadership is crucial for fostering positive working relationships and promoting professional development (Assefa et al. 2024). In China, the influence of leader support on academic staff with different professional ranks is mainly reflected in the allocation of resources and the setting of professional ranks promotion institutions. Ordinary teachers lack sufficient voice in matters related to the construction of the professional title system related to their own development (Niu & Zhang 2022). In terms of faculty promotion to associate professor alone, there is indeed a bias in universities that places more emphasis on the number of papers and encourages young scholars to carry out short-term research. The academic evaluation orientation of producing results and producing results quickly ignores the knowledge contribution of achievements. Therefore, university leaders should strengthen internal governance, pursue shared governance of stakeholders, achieve a delicate balance between administrative power and academic power, and better support the development of academic staff (Ren Ke 2020).

Professionalism Differences Based on Academic Staff Professional Titles

Professionalism can vary based on professional titles, which reflect different characteristics and requirements. Lasig et al. (2024) thought professional titles acknowledges personal academic achievements and qualifications, particularly in academic and research settings. Moreover, the significance of professional titles, such as professor, associate professor, and assistant professor, is emphasized in signifying a scientist's professional role and the associated conditions and benefits (Shang et al. 2022). In China, different professional titles have different responsibilities. Teaching assistants assist in teaching part of the course content and have certain professional knowledge. Lecturers are required to master the basic teaching concepts and teaching methods, undertake all or part of the course teaching, have solid professional knowledge, and publish papers or textbooks and other representative achievements. Associate professor and professor atmosphere: teaching, research and teaching-oriented. In addition to the high requirements of

professional knowledge, more outstanding research results and higher academic attainments are also required (MOE 2022). Moreover, the professional title is regarded as the most obvious and direct sign of the professional development of academic staff. Research manifested that with the promotion of professional titles, the number of academic staff's paper published has also increased, and the frequent of flow has been conducive to the publication of academic staff's English papers in various universities, while negatively impact the publication of their Chinese papers to certain extent(Xu 2023). Overall, the professional title is an important standard to measure the knowledge, ability and level of academic staff. Professional development differs based on professional titles, encompassing academic achievements, professional learning, etc. al.

Academic Staff Well-Being Differences Based on Professional Titles

Academic well-being various based on professional titles, with job-related well-being being a significant factor for academics (Truța et al. 2023). Duke et al. (2020) survived assistant professor who attended a faculty development program and found that assistant professor dimensions of burnout correlated significantly with faculty perceptions of department characteristics, which were related to commitment to well-being, value for contributions, and empowerment to communicate professional needs. However, Heiden et al. (2021) found that there was no difference in ratings of work-life balance between lecturers and professors with different telework frequency or any association between the amount of telework performed per week and perceived work-life balance. In sum, these findings highlight the nuanced differences in academic well-being based on professional titles, emphasizing the importance of considering job-related well-being when analyzing the experiences of academics at different professional levels.

YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Leader Support Differences Based on Years of Teaching Experience

Research had proved that administrative support is crucial for university teachers at different stages of their careers. early-career teachers particularly benefit from positive administrative presence, as it significantly influence their outcomes (Auletto 2021). This support is not limited to early-career teachers, experienced teachers also require administrative backing to enhance their effectiveness and job satisfaction (Nguyen 2021). In China, Young teachers in universities think that the leaders do not trust themselves, can not make the best use of others, and even think that the leaders have no room for talent; When some middle-aged and elderly teachers in universities are faced with the relative lack of supply and demand of vital material interests such as professional title evaluation, selection of advanced, going out for further study, job promotion and salary increase, they will have different positions with the leadership and breed contradictions (Zhou 2018). Guo Qin (2024) thought that Middle-aged teachers in universities are regarded that they should establish an effective two-way communication mechanism between them and school leaders, so that leaders can better understand the needs and problems of them, so as to provide effective psychological support and reduce burnout. In sum, school leaders should give appropriate help according to the characteristics and needs of teachers of different years of teaching experiences, so that they can work and live better.

Professionalism Differences Based on Years of Teaching Experience

Professionalism can be seen as a lifelong commitment and a disposition to progress towards profession (Dahl 2015). Years of work and experience are crucial for quality teaching, influencing teachers' professional development and their views (Bohak Adam & Metljak 2022). Yushau and Nannim (2020) compared the mean ratings of lecturers based on difference in years of teaching experience. The result shows a statistically significant difference in lecturers level of utilization of ICT facilities for teaching purposes based on years of teaching experiences. This implies that lecturers with longer years of teaching experiences had higher level of utilization of ICT facilities in teaching compared to those with smaller years of teaching. While some research found that there was not any significant difference between teachers' performance based on teaching experience (Mashhadlou & Izadpanah 2021). Additionally, Zalat et al. (2021) investigated factors influencing the acceptance and use of e-learning as a tool teaching within higher education and found that The significant indicators affecting e-learning acceptance were age under 40 years, teaching experience less than 10 years, and male gender. The result is in agreement with Fischer et al. (2014) who stated that older staff with long traditional teaching experience usually has limited interaction with technology and lacking the development of their necessary skills. In sum, academic staff with different years of teaching experience have many influences on professionalism. Youth teachers improve their teaching ability and scientific research ability quickly and have higher requirements and expectations for professionalism. The senior teachers, with their rich teaching experience and professional knowledge, provide strong support for the all-round development of students.

Academic Staff Well-Being Differences Based on Years of Teaching Experience

Research indicates that teacher well-being may change over time, with teaching experience playing a significant role in this dynamic. Specifically, it has been found that teaching experience has a negative association with the job satisfaction of second career teachers, while this relationship is not observed for first career teachers (Fütterer et al. 2023). In China, the work well-being of university teachers is ranked as 30 years and above, 20 ~ 30 years, less than 10 years, and 10 ~ 20 years in terms of teaching experience, and teachers with 30 years or more of work experience are significantly higher than teachers with other three stages of teaching experience, especially in terms of work fulfillment and work emotion (Chen Wenjing 2019). Xiao Xia (2022) believed that the well-being of new university teacher is higher, especially in the dimension of interpersonal relationships, because new university teachers are relatively young, most of them are unmarried, and they are more open and free in interpersonal communication with colleagues in the unit. University teachers with 16~20 years of teaching experience have high work pressure and life

pressure, physical problems, and low well-being in physical and mental health. Overall, academic staff with different years of teaching experience face different challenges and opportunities in their careers, and their well-being will vary accordingly.

University Type

Different countries have different classification methods for university, public and private university mainly distinguished based on the governance structure (Tien et al. 2022), while China can mainly be divided into double first-class and ordinary universities according to different degrees of importance.

Leader Support Differences Based on University Type

Private and public universities differ in various aspects, particularly in leadership support. For one thing, private university presidents may require strong leadership and management abilities due to their reliance on private donations. So private universities tend to outperform public universities in terms of learning outcomes and technical efficiency (Rivera-Camino & Mejia 2006; Monks 2007; An 2022). For another thing, public university presidents need to be capable of soliciting resources from state legislatures and benefit from longstanding history, government subsidies, and competitive entrance examinations, which contribute to their prestige and ability to attract top student (Kim & Park 2018; Tangkitvanich & Manasboonphempool 2010).

In China, according to the importance degree mainly categorized into double first-class university and ordinary university. The number and scale of "double first-class" universities are only a small number of higher education in the country, and ordinary universities are the vast majority and absolute subject of higher education (Long & Liu 2024). Whether it is a double-first-class university or an ordinary university, university presidents need to actively strive for the support of all resources in society, so as to form a long-term governance construction mechanism with multiple supports, optimize the overall adjustment of internal and external governance structure layout, and better serve the academic staff (Tian & Huang 2019). In sum, the differences in leadership support among different types of universities reflect their respective strategic priorities and resource allocations. They will offer academic staff different development environment.

Professionalism Differences Based on University Type

Different universities exhibit differences in their mandates and operations, particularly in the context of academic staff professional development. Private universities tend to outperform public universities in terms of technical and technological efficiency, managerial performance, and scale size adjustment, indicating the need for modern technology application and improved managerial performance in public universities (An 2022). In China, Liu and Wang (2022) thought that compared with the "double world-class" universities and non-"double world-class" universities (hereinafter referred to as "non-double" universities) which face problems such as limited policy support, tight funds, insufficient resources, relatively poor enrollment quality, lack of discipline leading talents, and relatively few opportunities for young teachers to further their education. Young academic staff lack systematic teaching ability training and insufficient teaching practice. It is difficult to apply for fund projects and the progress of scientific research is slow, The lack of scientific research service platform, the distraction of young teachers, the great economic pressure, and the difficulty in balancing career and life. In sum, different universities will exhibit differences resources in academic staff professionalism and underscore the distinct professional landscapes.

Academic Staff Well-Being Differences Based on University Type

Well-being has been noted to significantly influence academic performance, social skills, and physical health, emphasizing its importance in the university context (Latorre-Cosculluela et al. 2022). Mohammadi and Karupiah (2020) thought that Quality of work life (QWL) can affect the psychological well-being of employees, but due to the different working cultures of public and private universities and the different facilities and opportunities provided for academic staff, there are significant differences in QWL of university teachers in terms of power and colleague relationship. In China, Song (2023) concluded that the nature of institutions has a significant impact on the job satisfaction of academic staff. Chen (2019) found that in the category of universities, the order of work well-being is "985 Project" universities > "211 Project" universities > provincial undergraduate colleges > higher vocational colleges. Moreover, Guo and Wu (2022) showed that the university category factor has an impact on occupational well-being, and the well-being of academic staff in undergraduate university is higher than that of academic staff in vocational colleges, which is mainly due to higher vocational education is less recognized by the society, and it is difficult for its academic staff to experience the sense of value and well-being brought by the profession itself. In summary, the research indicates a need for a more comprehensive approach to understanding and addressing the well-being of academic staff in different university settings.

Model Development

Relationship between leader Support and Professionalism

The relationship between leader support and professionalism in the university setting is crucial for teacher's professional learning and work effectiveness. Supportive leaders play critical roles by providing feedback, necessary resources, encouraging experimentation, and creating opportunities for collaboration (Lee et al. 2020).

In China, research has proved that servant leadership has a significant positive impact on the career success of subordinates (Wei 2022). The professional development of young academic staff needs leaders to care, pay attention

to, and take care of their personalized, differentiated, and individualized professional growth and realistic demands, with the value goal of "pursuit of excellence" and the value of "system concept", to tailor a professional development path for young teachers, and to build a good professional development ecology for young teachers to teach with peace of mind, so as to make teachers more stable (Ji 2024). In addition, Chinese academic staff have a strong institutional dependence on universities, which provides opportunities for interaction between university administrative leaders and academic staff. University administrative leaders will guide the development of the academic status of university faculty through formal and informal institutional design (Xie 2024).

Relationships between leader support and Academic Staff Well-Being

The relationship between leader support and academic staff well-being is a crucial area of study, with findings indicating that leader support significantly impacts staff well-being (Connolly et al. 2024). Leader support can enhance teacher well-being through buff against stress and burnout, impact job satisfaction and increased engagement, and cultivate an organization-positive climate. In China, Leader support is also regarded as an important resource for teacher well-being. Liu et al (2022) examined how distributed leadership contributes to teacher well-being with attention to the mediating role of organizational trust. Results showed a nonsignificant direct effect between distributed leadership and teacher well-being. Moreover, Wu et al.(2020) agree Gustafsson et al. (2019) that that stronger leader support and lower levels of role conflict, role ambiguity, and pressure can predict greater well-being and teacher retention. This study noted that administrator support provide higher well-being. The administrators of schools can support teachers and provide positive emotional energy through informal organizations. Furthermore, Zhang Sen (2021) thought leader support can deal with the difficulties and challenges of work and improve teacher well-being through intellectual stimulation and care from leader transformational leadership. Transformational leadership of leader can put their own interest behind the collective interests and win the trust of the subordinates, hence, it will improve teacher well-being. Therefore, teacher well-being is influenced greatly by leader support through leader leadership style.

Relationships Between Professionalism and Academic Staff Well-Being

Professionalism is intricately linked to academic staff well-being, impacting job satisfaction, organizational behavior, and potentially serving as a basis for intervention to enhance well-being (Hascher & Waber 2021a; Orkibi & Bar-nir 2015; Pabel et al. 2022). Studies pertaining to professionalism as a variable are scarce. This is because the majority of researchers favour concentrating on the professional identity or development of teachers, which is closely related to professionalism. Therefore, The literature review that follows will focus on professional identity and professional development for teachers in addition to professionalism. In China, the Chinese government's double reduction policy aims to solve the problem of overburdened academic work and overburdened off-campus training for primary and secondary school students. As the main implementers of policies, teachers also feel the opportunities brought by the reform of education methods and the higher requirements for their own abilities and quality. Thus, the government has established long-term guarantees to improve teachers well-being (Qian & Jianzhu 2023). Cao Maojia and Xu Shuyan (2022) analyzed the motivation of professional development from young teachers in university, they thought teacher well-being was an continuous happy experience which can encourage them devote to professional development. The professional development of young teachers in Guangxi universities is the focus of Shanshan and Liu Ningxin's (2023) study. They investigate the primary motivators that influence the professional development of young teachers and conclude that, in addition to societal and educational support, teacher well-being—which is a component of internal motivators—is also necessary for the professional development of teachers. Therefore, Chinese researchers are primarily interested in the connections between the well-being of young teachers and professional development.

Professionalism as a Mediator

Mediation analysis techniques are increasingly used in research as scientists seek to explore causal relationships more in depth (Vander Weele 2016). A variable that causes mediation between the independent and dependent variables is known as a mediator variable. Stated differently, it clarifies the correlation between the independent and dependent variables. The mediating role of teacher professionalism among public school teachers in relation to public leadership and school effectiveness was investigated in Kocak and Bozkurt Bostanci's (2020) study. Results indicated that teacher professionalism acted as a major mediating factor in the relationships between public leadership and school effectiveness. As a result, by raising teacher professionalism, public leadership indirectly contributes to the effectiveness of schools. In order to investigate the mediating roles that teacher professionalism plays in the relationships between motivation, self-confidence, teaching effectiveness, and teacher professionalism, Samsuddin et al. (2023) conducted another study in which they looked at these relationships. Using a quantitative methodology and an explanatory research design, the researchers demonstrated that professionalism significantly and favourably affects the effectiveness of instruction. Moreover, self-confidence, mediated by professionalism, positively and significantly affects teaching effectiveness, as does motivation through professionalism. These results imply that teaching effectiveness, as an indicator of teacher success, is determined by the combination of teacher self-confidence and motivation, mediated by their professionalism in delivering effective learning to students.

Conclusion

The study of leader support has revealed the importance of considering various dimensions, such as work-family issues, in assessing the impact of leader support on employees. This underscores the need for a comprehensive

understanding of the diverse aspects of leader support and its implications for professionalism in the workplace. Moreover, different types of leader support and their impact on professionalism need to further research. Therefore, this study will research the relationships between dimensions of leader support and professionalism about Chinese university teachers; The existing literature provides valuable insights into the impact of leader support on teacher well-being, but there is a clear call for more focused research to address the specific dynamics within academic settings. Moreover, there is a research gap in understanding the specific mechanism through which leader support impacts academic staff well-being, and the theoretical integration of well-being theories for application in leadership research is proposed to guide research in this area. Furthermore, the impact of leader support on academic staff well-being will be influenced by cultural, institutional, and contextual factors.

Research on the connection between academic staff well-being and leader support is scarce in Chinese universities. Therefore, this study will deepen our understanding of the ways in which leader support affects the well-being of academic staff in Chinese universities; Professionalism and well-being are significant but are only now starting to be recognised in higher education. Moreover, professionalism is associated with burnout and social support, with burnout being negatively linked to professionalism, particularly in respect and responsibility. Furthermore, these insights underscore the need for institutions to prioritize the understanding and promotion of professionalism to support the well-being of academic staff. Therefore, this study will focus on the relationships between professionalism and teacher well-being in Chinese university. Teachers include but not limited to young teachers; These earlier research has demonstrated that professionalism can act as a mediating factor. Regarding the current study, the importance of teachers' individual attitudes and their impact on traits like leadership and work satisfaction led to the use of their professionalism as a mediator. Additionally, there hasn't been any empirical research done on the role that teachers' professionalism plays as a mediator between the relationship between teacher well-being and support from leaders. The results will be added to the corpus of work in the study's field of study.

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