

Burnout Phenomenon and Its Causes among Private University Teachers in China: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

The attrition rate among private university teachers is notably higher than that of public universities. However, current research addressing the burnout of private university teachers remains relatively limited. This study delves into causes of teacher burnout among private university teachers based on Self-Determination Theory, using qualitative research methods. The findings reveal that all participants exhibited varying degrees of emotional exhaustion, indifference, and reduced enthusiasm for their work, primarily because of the lack of perceived competence, relatedness deficiency and insufficient autonomy. Moreover, this study proposes interventions for educational institutions and suggests future research directions to address this issue.

Keywords

Burnout; Self-Determination Theory; Causes; Qualitative research methods.

1. INTRODUCTION

Burnout is easily observed in those who have a lot of interaction with others (Evers et al., 2005). Teachers are required to have frequent personal interactions with students and other teachers, therefore teaching is generally considered one of the most stressful professional occupations (Naghieh et al., 2015). Teacher burnout can damage teachers' physical and mental health, reduce their job performance, affect their educational career, and also affect students' academic progress (Mahmoodi-Shahrehabaki, 2019). University teacher burnout is becoming more common (Henthorn, 2022), and this phenomenon is now no exception in China. High expectations, influenced by the traditional educational philosophy (i.e., Confucian beliefs) that teachers are not only providers of knowledge, but also role models, authority figures, and even parents of their students (Zhang & Zhu, 2008), have exacerbated teacher burnout in China (Luk et al., 2010). A 2014 survey by China's Ministry of Education showed that 70% of college and university teachers exhibit some degree of burnout, and also noted that the departure rate of college and university teachers continues to rise, indicating that burnout among university teachers is becoming a more serious problem.

According to the latest list of national higher education institutions released by the Ministry of Education in 2022, there are 1,270 undergraduate universities in China, while there are 412 private undergraduate universities. Private universities have become an important part of China's education system. Teachers in private universities face the existence of greater existential pressure, less sense of belonging, and lower social status than teachers in public universities. The main reason for this is that public universities in China are fully funded by the state, while private universities are usually funded by students' tuition fees or by corporations. This makes the inequality in faculty salaries between the two types of universities more pronounced, while private university faculty have greater pressure to enroll students.

Additionally, private universities employ faculty on a contractual basis rather than tenure, as is the case at public universities. This creates a sense of instability and a lack of belonging for private university teachers. In addition, in the classification of social organization units, private universities are defined as enterprise units or private non-enterprise units, and public universities are defined as institutions. People tend to think that teachers in private universities are not teachers in the real sense. This public opinion leads to psychological imbalance and a sense of loss among teachers in private universities. These lead to a more serious phenomenon of teacher burnout in private universities, resulting in a much higher departure rate in private universities than in public universities, which is not conducive to the sustainable development of education. In the academic world, more and more scholars pay attention to the phenomenon of university teacher burnout (Siyum, 2022), and they hope that the problem of university teacher burnout can be solved to promote the development of education.

Teachers in private universities face special pressures and challenges that are different from those in public universities, so in the specific context of private universities, the problem of teacher burnout may be different from that in public universities, and scholars focus more on public universities or do not distinguish between the two in their studies, and fewer studies specifically focus on private universities (Wang, 2023), so there is a need for in-depth research on it. This study will focus on burnout among teachers in private universities, based on self-determination theory, to explore in depth its specific manifestations, the fulfillment of psychological needs, and how it affects burnout while aiming to suggest effective ways to reduce teachers' burnout.

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology and draws on self-determination theory to explore in depth the phenomenon of burnout and its causes among private university teachers. Specifically, this study will focus on the following research questions:

- (1) What are the specific manifestations of teacher burnout in private universities?
- (2) Are the 3 psychological needs that constitute the motivation of private university teachers satisfied?
- (3) How do the 3 psychological needs that constitute motivation for private university teachers affect burnout?
- (4) How to reduce burnout among private university teachers?

According to the government document "Law on the Promotion of Private Education" (2017), private universities in this study are considered as higher education institutions that are not funded by the public budget and award bachelor's degrees after four years of full-time study, i.e., "private undergraduate universities". The scope of this study is limited to a group of teachers at a private university in Yunnan Province. This school was chosen because I am employed there. Teachers in this school often complained: "The pressure is so high" and "I wish I could take a vacation forever" Before the new semester starts, I often have nightmares about the mistakes I made in teaching". The phenomenon of teachers' high stress, mental tension, and physical fatigue has emerged.

This study uses qualitative research to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' real experiences, feelings, and perspectives. Applying the framework of self-determination theory to study the causes of burnout among teachers in private universities, can provide useful theoretical support for understanding the causes of teachers' mental health problems. In addition, this study will target better support and resources for teachers to mitigate burnout, thereby improving their quality of work and life satisfaction and contributing to the performance of educational institutions. Due to the use of qualitative research methodology, the results of the study may be influenced by the subjective views of the researcher. Due to time and resource constraints, this study selected the sample as faculty members of one teaching

university as a research sample, which may not be able to cover the entire diversity of private university faculty members.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

“Burnout is a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment among individuals who work with others in some capacity”(Maslach et al., 1997). The burnout response has been described as threefold: depletion of emotional reserves(emotional exhaustion), increasing cynicism and negativity toward others (depersonalization), and increasing feelings of job dissatisfaction (personal accomplishment) (Watts & Robertson, 2011). Teacher burnout can damage teachers' physical and mental health, reduce their job performance, affect their educational career, and also affect students' academic progress.

More and more scholars are studying the phenomenon of burnout among university teachers. Previous studies on university teacher burnout emphasized antecedents and influencing factors. Some studies have been conducted on teachers in private universities, but not many. After reviewing a lot of literature from google scholar, the author found that self-determination theory is widely adopted to explore the relationship between motivation and burnout (Kyaw, 2021a). The literature review of previous studies can provide theoretical guidance, help this study to clarify the research questions, and provide practical guidance.

2.1. Burnout among university teachers

Over the past two decades, the workload of higher education workers has increased significantly (Anderson, 2006). Teaching, research, and administrative demands have continued to increase, and promotion prospects and performance management are now "directly related to the achievement of measurable outcomes in all performance areas" (Sabagh et al., 2018). Increased workloads, combined with job interruptions, excessive paperwork, and frequent deadlines, have reduced academic morale and job satisfaction (Pop-Vasileva et al., 2011). The main cause of burnout among university teachers has been defined as the enormous workload they endure (García-Arroyo et al., 2019). A study examining teacher burnout in Chinese universities showed that teacher-researcher role conflict diminished teachers' work energy and enthusiasm (Xu, 2019).

Organizational climate and support play a crucial role in teachers' feelings of burnout. Organizational climate represents a worker's perception of his objective work situation, including the characteristics of the organization in which he works and the nature of his relationships with other people while at work(Churchill et al., 1976). Research findings indicate that the higher the level of support from the organization or superiors, the lower the level of burnout(Rothmann et al., 2008). Research conducted by Dinibutun, S. R., et al. (2020) examined the effects of organizational climate on burnout among public and private university teachers, and the results of the study showed that all dimensions of organizational climate negatively affected teachers' emotional exhaustion, that state university faculty with the organizational climate cohesion dimension were less likely to be emotionally exhausted, and that cohesion had a negative impact on depersonalization among private university teachers(Dinibutun et al., 2020). The study by Larson, L. M. et al. (2019) on the psychological well-being of university teachers shows that the organizational environment, such as administrative support and research support, affects the three psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and sense of belonging, and the degree to which they are met affects the experiences and emotions of teachers at work(Larson et al., 2019).

The extent of job resources available to university faculty is also associated with burnout (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). Studies have found that higher levels of resources correspond with

moderately lower levels of burnout (Rothmann et al., 2008). In addition, participation in decision-making was found to predict greater perceived achievement in South African academia (Pretorius, 1994). In a study by Yastibas, A. E. (2021) comparing the burnout levels of Turkish English language teachers in public and private universities, it was found that administrative support had an effect on depersonalization, social support had an effect on emotional exhaustion, and job satisfaction and job stress had an effect on the three dimensions of burnout (Pretorius, 1994).

In addition, the study found that the research on this topic has been mainly quantitative, as mentioned in the literature study by Mula-Falcón, J. et al. (2022), in terms of the methodology used to study burnout among university teachers, quantitative methods are predominant (Mula-Falcón et al., 2022). Qualitative methods, on the other hand, have been used by fewer studies. Mula-Falcón et al. (2022) suggests that scholars can conduct qualitative research to gain a deeper understanding of the high levels of stress experienced by university faculty and staff.

2.2. Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a psychological theory proposed by psychologists Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan in 1985 to explain an individual's intrinsic drive in terms of behavior and motivation. The framework of Self-Determination Theory focuses on three basic psychological needs, including Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy refers to an individual's ability to have a degree of control and choice. Competence refers to an individual's perceived ability to accomplish tasks and reach goals. Relatedness refers to the individual's perception of connection and social relationships with others. The more these three basic needs are met, the higher the level of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Self-determination theory (SDT) provides a sound theoretical framework for better understanding the motivational processes that lead to serious negative outcomes (Ryan, R. M. et al. 2000). Kyaw (2021) examined perceived autonomy as a variable test to examine teachers' perceived burnout. The results of this study showed that if teachers' autonomy increased, their burnout decreased, and vice versa. Abós et al. (2021) explored the relationship between physical education teachers' autonomy, competence, and relatedness fulfillment and teacher burnout based on self-determination theory. The results showed that the quality of motivation is important for the job satisfaction of physical education teachers, especially for their emotional exhaustion. Vaa Stelling et al. (2023) explored the relationship between professional identity formation and burnout through in-depth interviews and in conjunction with rationale self-determination theory, and the results indicated that institutional autonomy support in pursuing important opportunities for professional development helped to reduce burnout. These two studies gave greater inspiration to the present study that studying the phenomenon of teacher burnout in conjunction with self-determination theory can lead to an understanding of the causes of teachers' mental health problems.

This study synthesizes the current research status on university faculty burnout, and adopts qualitative research methods, based on autonomous decision-making theory, to explore the fulfillment of three psychological needs of private university faculty: autonomy, competence, and sense of belonging, and their relationship with burnout, aiming at proposing an effective way to alleviate faculty burnout.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This study aims to deeply explore the phenomenon of teacher burnout and its causes in Chinese private universities, adopting a qualitative research method and using in-depth interviews to obtain rich information. The author interviewed teachers of different genders and

different stages of career development who experienced burnout in private universities to understand their performance in terms of burnout and work motivation.

3.2. Research paradigm

Interpretivism is a research paradigm that seeks to understand and explain human behavior and social phenomena from the perspective of the participants (Pulla & Carter, 2018). In contrast to positivism, which emphasizes objective observation and measurement of variables, interpretivism focuses on participants' meanings, perceptions, and interpretations. An important method in interpretivism research is the qualitative method. Qualitative research methods allow for the collection of data directly related to subjective experiences; therefore, its application is investigative (Flick, 2022).

Adopting an interpretive perspective allows me to examine how individual teachers perceive and experience burnout in their unique professional and personal environments. By understanding teachers' subjective realities, it is possible to reveal the role of factors such as organizational culture, working relationships, and decision-making autonomy in contributing to burnout. This approach helps to reveal complexities and nuances that may not be captured by quantitative methods. This approach allows me to go beyond mere statistical analysis and delve into the nature of teachers' meanings and explanations of burnout. In the context of studying burnout among university teachers, interpretivism will serve as a powerful framework to help me explore the reasons behind burnout and provide new perspectives on supporting the well-being of teachers in higher education institutions.

3.3. Research design

In conjunction with the research objectives, this paper utilizes a purposive sampling procedure. Purposeful sampling is defined as a method that makes a deliberate effort to obtain a representative sample by including groups within the probable area (Ortiz & Greene, 2007). The goal of this study was to select respondents with the desired characteristics of the sample, i.e., burned-out university teachers. The respondents in this study were three university teachers from a private university in Yunnan Province, China, who encompassed different genders, different career stages, and exhibited burnout. The respondents were considered "informative" and could provide useful information on the issue under investigation. The selection of the sample contributed to a greater diversity of perspectives and experiences.

In-depth face-to-face interviews with three teachers from a private university provided an open-ended understanding of the level of motivation as well as the stresses, challenges, and manifestations of burnout experienced by teachers in their teaching roles. Face-to-face interviews allow teachers to express their thoughts and feelings freely without the constraints of a structured questionnaire, resulting in richer, in-depth qualitative data.

After data collection, this study used NVivo 12 qualitative analysis software (a qualitative research software that helps to organize and analyze qualitative data) as an auxiliary analytical tool based on grounded theory to organize, analyze, code, and compare the interview data, and finally transform them in order to form concepts, categories, and analogies at different levels, thus constructing the corresponding themes and conclusions. The study used theory-prompted inductive methods to guide the generation of ideas and themes that informed the data collection.

3.4. Data collection

Qualitative data collection methods, such as observation and interviews, are preferred by researchers studying interpretive paradigms (Ortiz & Greene, 2007). In this study, semi-structured interviews and face-to-face personal interviews were used as the primary methods of data collection. When the interview is personal, it helps to elicit in-depth responses from the

respondents. This process helps the respondents to understand the issues more clearly (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Unstructured interviews allow the researcher to explore deeper data to elaborate on the problem. Due to the flexibility of this method, participants elaborated during the exploration process (Gill et al., 2008). An interview guide was developed before data collection as it explored and identified areas that had to be addressed, helping to save time. In addition, the interview guide would ensure consistency in the focus and core content of the study during the interviews with different respondents, while also providing enough flexibility for respondents to freely express their personal views and experiences during the interviews. The interview guide included open-ended questions about specific distresses and challenges faced by teachers in their work, and teachers' experiences and feelings of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their work.

All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and identified. The researcher focused on credibility and reliability to ensure the quality of the qualitative data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The study involved participants in face-to-face interviews and participants' responses were audio-recorded (with permission). Researchers transcribed the audio recordings verbatim. The transcribed text was submitted to the respondents for review and proofread repeatedly to ensure the reliability of the interview information. The participation of private university teachers with burnout characteristics ensured the credibility of the study.

3.5. Data analysis

The study used a thematic analysis approach in conducting qualitative data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to determine the causes of participant burnout. Thematic analysis is a commonly used qualitative research method for gaining a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives, feelings, and experiences on a particular topic. The purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of burnout and its causes among teachers in Chinese private universities. The thematic analysis allows us to systematically code and organize the interview data, identify the themes that emerge from them, and gain a deeper understanding of teachers' real feelings and perspectives on burnout. The steps of thematic analysis method include transcription of data, data organization, data coding, and generation of themes. Through this method, the study can dig deeper into the potential information in the data, demonstrate the perspectives and experiences of different respondents, and delve deeper into the explanations of private university teachers' burnout within the framework of self-determination theory.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Three respondents with teaching ages between 3 and 16 were interviewed in each case about their burnout and the fulfillment of their heart needs in the 3 areas of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as well as burnout. These participants were from the same private university and were at different career stages. The participants details are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic table

Participants	Age	Gender	Professional Title	Teaching experience
A	35	Female	Associate Professor	10
B	40	Male	Associate Professor	16
C	28	Female	Lecturer	3

Notes: The three interviewees were pseudonymized as A, B, and C.

Through an analysis of transcripts, this study identified and organized nine codes (Work arrangement, Resource support, Competence level, Competence improvement, Competence assessment, Relationship with students, Relationship with colleagues, Management dissatisfaction, and School care). Through further identification and synthesis, the study, based on the Self-Determination Theory's three psychological needs, extracted three themes from the interviews that can explain burnout: lack of autonomy, perceived competence, and sense of belonging. Refer to Figure 1 for illustration.

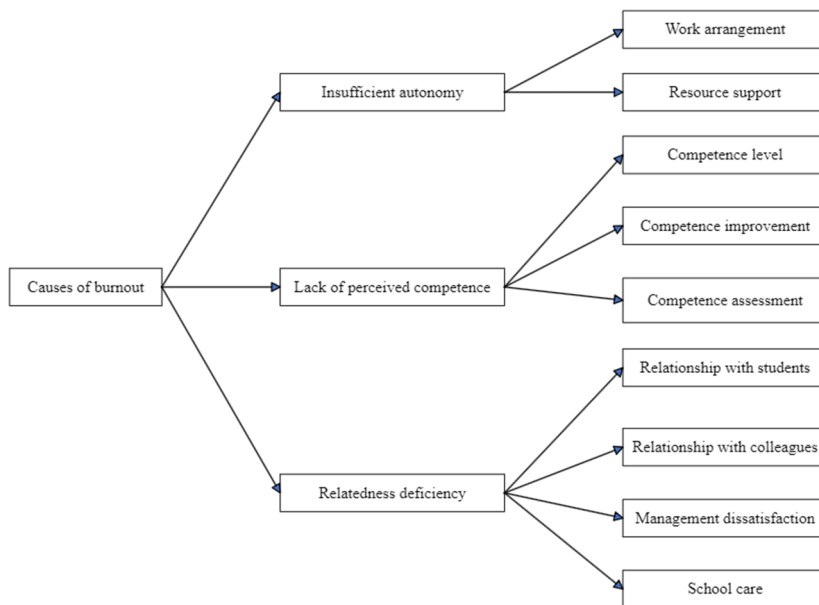


Figure 1. Hierarchical tree

Through the interviews, the author found that respondents showed varying degrees of burnout at work. They said that they often felt stressed out. Respondents B and C both have a sense of disillusionment regarding their teaching innovation and research efforts. The pressures of teaching and research have become overwhelming for them, leaving them feeling burdened. The respondents also indicated that their relationships with colleagues are quite distant. Teacher burnout is typically characterized by emotional exhaustion, indifference, and a loss of enthusiasm for work, all of which are evident in the respondents. They are displaying more pronounced emotional burnout and mental stress. These manifestations not only impact the psychological well-being and job performance of individual teachers but also have repercussions on students' academic progress (Siyum, 2022). Therefore, in the following steps, this study will delve further into analyzing the underlying causes of the respondents' burnout.

Theme 1: Insufficient autonomy

According to SDT, autonomy is the degree to which individuals make their own choices in behavior, including the ability to actively participate in decisions and actions. During the interviews, the respondents indicated that they were more restricted in administrative matters, training, and research projects. One respondent said "I have to spend a lot of time doing trivial and meaningless things such as filling out forms, simple copying and pasting and other chores... It's actually a clerk's job... It's obvious that I don't have to do this, but I have to schedule it this way... It's a waste of time." This restrictive arrangement of administrative duties deprived teachers of their autonomy in teaching and research, which in turn increased their workload and burnout. Respondents claimed that they were assigned to training that was "useless". For example, respondents A said, "The school arranges a lot of training, but some of them have nothing to do with my specialty, and I have to attend them.Improvement of competence can't be done by one training. In short, the training I attended was not what I wanted...". This mandatory

and ineffective training reduces teachers' autonomy in personal learning and professional development, making them feel that training is a waste of resources and lacks support for their individual learning needs. In addition, respondents said, "The school asks us to declare projects and do curriculum building, but then they don't give funding... And the number of projects each time is so small that there is no chance. It's hard to do the project, but it's too difficult to get reimbursed for the funds. It doesn't feel like it wants me to be reimbursed. The lack of support for research resources and inflexible funding management may limit teachers' ability to conduct independent research, leading to a lack of satisfaction and motivation in research."

These manifestations suggest that private teachers have low levels of autonomy in their work. Lack of autonomy may lead teachers to feel a lack of control and initiative, but rather passive in performing their tasks, a state that may trigger burnout. This is in apparent agreement with the results of this study by (Kyaw, 2021a), which suggests that if teachers' autonomy decreases, their burnout increases. The study by Abós et al. (2021), among others, also suggests that the more autonomous the motivation, the less likely it is to lead to a feeling of emotional exhaustion. If teachers' autonomy increases, their job satisfaction also increases. In addition, the study found a negative and low correlation between teachers' autonomy and burnout (Kyaw, 2021a).

Theme 2: Lack of perceived competence

In SDT, perceived competence refers to an individual's perception of his or her ability to perform a specific task. During the interviews, teachers mentioned their perceptions of their teaching and research competence, with some believing that they were currently able to cope with their current teaching tasks, while others felt that their competence needed to be further improved. For example, respondents B said, "I am fully sufficient to cope with my current teaching... But as the school grows, there is still a need to keep learning new skills, such as new software..." C said, "As a new teacher, I still need to add more to my knowledge base and expand the width of my knowledge base..."

Research skills are an area that respondents generally consider to be weak. However, the respondents indicated that there are limitations in improving their research skills. As A said, "The opportunities given by the school are too few, if the number of school-level research projects can be increased, so that as many teachers as possible can participate in them, then the promotion will be more effective." In addition, interviewees said that the drag of administrative affairs also contributed to the fact that they simply did not have much time to realize self-improvement. As respondent B said, "It's not that I don't want to do research, but I don't have the time and energy... And the university has included research in the performance appraisal, which makes me feel so much pressure." The limited capacity enhancement made the respondents feel a sense of frustration and pressure.

In addition, the respondents also mentioned that the school's performance appraisal criteria were unreasonable and did not truly reflect their teaching and research abilities. As one of the respondents said, "The current evaluation system has too many factors of human manipulation and is not objective... And like some high-level subject declaration is simply impossible to do ... If the performance standard is not met, is the teacher, not a good teacher? Teachers can't rely entirely on data. Teachers' work relies on conscience...". Another respondent said "As we get older, the lack of physical strength leads to a disadvantage in terms of what performance items are compared, and this kind of evaluation is not quite fair ..." Unreasonable assessment of competence results in inappropriate recognition of teachers' competence, which can easily lead to self-doubt, frustration, and other negative effects on teachers.

In summary, respondents' lack of confidence in their competence and perceived inadequacies led to uncertainty and worry about their work, which in turn affected their motivation to work. This is in keeping with previous research in the literature that teachers' lack of confidence in

their teaching abilities and expertise can lead to teacher depersonalization and burnout (Yastibas, 2021).

Theme 3: Relatedness deficiency

SDT emphasizes that an individual's level of commitment to his or her job is influenced by his or her sense of belonging in the organization. The sense of belonging is inseparable from the organizational climate of the school. Respondents generally felt that they were less close to students and coworkers. They showed dissatisfaction with their administrators and felt that the school was focused on profitability goals at the expense of teachers' feelings. Organizations do not care enough about teachers, and teachers may not receive enough support and recognition. An organizational climate that lacks a sense of belonging and support may lead teachers to develop a sense of disapproval of the organization (Siyum, 2022; Dinibutun et al., 2020), resulting in decreased motivation and commitment. As respondent A said, "The relationship between teachers and students is the relationship between the servant and the served... By maintaining a certain relationship with my students, I will not be harmed...". Respondents A and C both said that they can be friendly with their colleagues, but not intimate, for example, A said, "We are just normal communication, too intimate relationship is not... Some people can't see the excellence of others, complaints always happen, I've been complained inexplicably." Additionally, all of the respondents expressed extreme dissatisfaction with the managers in their organization, with one respondent stating, "The leadership's management ideas are so chaotic and ineffective." "Blind command", "incompetence," and "chaotic management" were the most frequently mentioned words to evaluate the administrators. C also said, "Schools prioritize whether profit goals are met... Private schools, in various ways, focus on profit as their objective, emphasizing meeting workload standards and cost control, while showing too little concern for teachers. Especially, the insurance coverage standards are too low." The findings of Dinibutun, S. R., et al. (2020) showed that the organizational climate of private universities negatively affects the emotional exhaustion of teachers, and the lower cohesion of teachers in private universities has a significant effect on teacher burnout. This is consistent with the present study.

The results of the above analysis are consistent with the findings of Larson, L. M., et al. (2019) that administrative support, research support, and perceived competence affect autonomy, competence, and relatedness and the degree of fulfillment of these 3 needs affects the experience and emotions of teachers at work.

5. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1. Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that all respondents exhibited varying degrees of occupational burnout, manifested as emotional exhaustion, indifference, and reduced enthusiasm for their work. Through the application of the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), this research identified the causes of burnout among private university teachers: insufficient autonomy, lack of perceived competence, and relatedness deficiency. "Insufficient autonomy" underscored how administrative constraints and irrelevant mandatory training hindered teachers' autonomy in teaching and research, leading to increased workload and exacerbated occupational burnout. "Lack of perceived competence" unveiled that limited opportunities for skill enhancement, unrealistic performance assessments, and inadequate research support contributed to teachers' feelings of inadequacy and stress. The emphasis on "Relatedness deficiency" highlighted the indifference in teacher-student and colleague relationships, along with dissatisfaction with organizational management. These factors constituted the organizational climate in private schools, influencing teachers' sense of belonging and work motivation.

5.2. Implications and Recommendations

In this study, we investigated the causes of burnout among faculty members in private universities, focusing on three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and sense of belonging. The results indicate that inadequate autonomy, perceived lack of competence, and a deficiency in sense of belonging contribute to occupational burnout among faculty members in private universities. In terms of autonomy support, administrators should consider reducing administrative constraints to allow teachers to concentrate on teaching and research. Additionally, teachers should have a certain degree of autonomy in selecting training programs. Moreover, it is recommended to solicit input from teachers to enhance their involvement in the decision-making process. Regarding perceived competence, it is suggested to provide opportunities for improving teaching and research abilities while minimizing administrative burdens. Faculty members should be matched with targeted and suitable training programs, and research resources should be increased, allowing for more flexible fund management to support faculty development. Furthermore, the performance evaluation system should be optimized, focusing on long-term development. Concerning the sense of belonging, enhancing the organizational atmosphere is essential. Administrators should foster harmonious interpersonal relationships among teachers and colleagues. Importantly, a shift in management approach is necessary, emphasizing both the long-term development of teachers and the school, rather than focusing solely on cost-effectiveness. This approach can bolster the sense of belonging among faculty members and increase job satisfaction.

However, this study has its limitations. Due to the limited sample size, the generalizability of the findings might be restricted. Thus, future research could expand the scope by including more faculty members from various private schools to gain a comprehensive understanding of the diversity in burnout levels and causes among private university faculty. Moreover, combining the theories of autonomous decision-making and job demand-resources could shed light on additional underlying factors influencing burnout among faculty members in private higher education institutions. Furthermore, future studies could assess the long-term effectiveness of existing burnout intervention measures, aiming to gradually refine the intervention mechanisms.

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