The Causal Model of Teachers' Well-being at Private Universities in Henan Province, China

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Abstract

This study investigated the critical factors influencing the psychological health of educators in the highly competitive private higher education sector. Specifically, this article aimed to 1) validate the constructs of organizational culture, organizational support, work engagement, self-efficacy, and teachers' well-being in private universities in Henan Province, China; and 2) analyze the causal relationships among these variables. Employing a quantitative research design, data were collected from full-time teachers across five private universities in Zhengzhou (N=408) through a self-structured questionnaire. The measurement model was validated using confirmatory factor analysis, confirming the reliability and validity of all constructs without excessive statistical redundancy. The proposed causal model was tested using structural equation modeling (SEM). Results revealed that both organizational culture and organizational support had a significant positive impact on teachers' well-being. Furthermore, organizational culture and organizational support had considerable positive effects on work engagement and self-efficacy. Crucially, the structural model demonstrated that work engagement and self-efficacy exerted a significant direct positive effect on teachers' well-being. Findings of the mediation analysis confirmed that self-efficacy and work engagement served as significant mediators between organizational factors and teachers' well-being. Moreover, a sequential mediation path was identified, illustrating that institutional resources bolstered self-efficacy, which subsequently enhanced work engagement, ultimately leading to improved teachers' well-being. In conclusion, this study provided empirical evidence that fostering a supportive organizational culture and enhancing internal psychological resources were vital strategies for sustaining teachers' well-being in private universities.

Keywords: Organizational Culture; Organizational Support; Self-Efficacy; Work Engagement; Teachers' Well-Being; Private Universities

Introduction

The professional landscape of higher education has experienced a paradigm shift, transitioning from a traditional focus on pedagogical outputs to a critical examination of educators' psychological health. Currently, teacher well-being is conceptualized as a dynamic psychological construct that significantly influences both institutional efficacy and student achievement (Granziera et al., 2022). In the context of China, the "Higher Education Expansion" policy has established a dual-track academic system. Within this framework, the rapid marketization of the sector has introduced corporate-style performance metrics that frequently conflict with traditional academic values (Day & Ching, 2021). This conflict creates a highly pressurized work environment, a phenomenon particularly acute within private (Minban) universities in inland regions such as Henan Province. Unlike state-backed public institutions, these private universities operate under rigorous financial and competitive constraints (Chen, 2025). As faculty members navigate increasing workloads alongside escalating research expectations, understanding the causal mechanisms that sustain or erode their well-being has emerged as a paramount concern for the sector's long-term sustainability.

Despite the urgency of this issue, a substantial lacuna persists in current scholarship regarding the structural antecedents of faculty well-being within China's private higher education sector. The majority of existing theoretical frameworks have been predominantly validated using Western samples or within primary and secondary educational settings (Hascher & Waber, 2021). Consequently, these models often fail to capture the unique socio-economic pressures inherent to Chinese private universities. Furthermore, the specific role of organizational culture—characterized in this context as a complex amalgamation of traditional hierarchical structures and modern managerialism—remains under-theorized concerning its direct impact on faculty mental health. While perceived organizational support is widely recognized as a buffer against occupational stress, the precise mechanisms through which such support translates into sustained work engagement in high-stakes environments lack robust empirical validation (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Methodologically, the field suffers from a distinct scarcity of integrated causal models capable of simultaneously evaluating multiple mediating variables. Previous empirical investigations have predominantly treated constructs such as organizational culture, organizational support, self-efficacy, and work engagement in isolation (Kim & Asbury, 2020). This compartmentalized approach has generated a fragmented understanding of the psychological processes governing faculty well-being. For instance, although self-efficacy is a documented determinant of task persistence, its capacity to mediate the adverse effects of a rigid organizational culture within the Chinese academic context remains insufficiently explored. This theoretical fragmentation severely restricts the development of comprehensive intervention strategies capable of addressing both institutional deficiencies and individual psychological needs.

To explicitly address these theoretical and empirical gaps, the present study synthesizes Social Cognitive Theory and Organizational Support Theory into a unified causal framework tailored specifically for the private higher education sector. By empirically testing a structural model that links organizational culture and support to well-being via the dual mediators of self-efficacy and work engagement, this research extends the explanatory power of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). The proposed framework provides a sophisticated delineation of the processes through which external institutional resources are cognitively internalized by faculty members to foster professional thriving.

From a practical standpoint, this research introduces a diagnostic tool for university administrators in Henan Province to systematically evaluate the health of their organizational ecosystems. By pinpointing the influential pathways from organizational support to work engagement, the findings equip policymakers with the empirical evidence necessary to move beyond superficial financial incentives. Instead, the focus is redirected toward cultivating the structural and psychological conditions essential for long-term faculty commitment. Ultimately, institutions that successfully foster a supportive organizational culture alongside high faculty self-efficacy are strategically positioned to achieve instructional excellence, elevate student outcomes, and contribute meaningfully to the regional knowledge economy (Hascher & Waber, 2021). This research underscores the ethical and economic imperative for universities to invest in the well-being of their human capital, thereby contributing to the overall advancement of the regional knowledge economy.

Research Objectives

1 . To validate the construct of organizational culture, organizational support, work engagement, self–efficacy and teachers' well–being in private universities in Henan Province, China.

2. To analyze the causal relationship among organizational culture, organizational support, work engagement, self–efficacy and teachers' well–being in private universities in Henan Province, China.

Literature Review

The theoretical architecture of this study is primarily constructed upon the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), which posits that human functioning is a product of the dynamic interplay between personal, behavioral, and environmental influences (Bandura, 1997). In the academic profession, this triadic reciprocal determinism suggests that teachers' psychological states are not merely internal phenomena but are continuously reshaped by the institutional climate of private universities. This perspective aligns with recent findings that environmental cues in higher education act as primary catalysts for self–referent thought, which subsequently dictates professional perseverance and emotional health (Hascher & Waber, 2021). By employing SCT, this research moves beyond descriptive analysis to explore the agency of faculty members within the structural constraints of the Henan educational market.

To complement the individual–centric view of SCT, the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model is integrated to provide a structural understanding of organizational impact. The JD–R model classifies work environments into job demands—which require sustained effort and are associated with physiological costs—and job resources, which are functional in achieving work goals and stimulating personal growth (Demerouti et al., 2001). Within the private tertiary sector, organizational culture and support function as vital "resources" that can buffer the psychological impact of high–intensity teaching and research demands (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). This theoretical integration allows for an examination of the "motivational process," where institutional resources foster engagement and well–being, even in the presence of significant professional stressors.

Furthermore, the study incorporates Perceived Organizational Support (POS) Theory, which emphasizes the employees' perception of how much the organization values their contributions and cares about their well–being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). In the context of Chinese private

universities, POS is often manifested through leadership style, career development opportunities, and administrative transparency. Research has consistently demonstrated that high POS fosters a sense of felt obligation among faculty, which leads to increased dedication and reduced emotional exhaustion (Chen, 2025). Together, SCT, JD–R, and POS provide a multi–layered theoretical lens that captures both the cognitive internalizations and the structural realities of the academic workplace in Henan.

Conceptual Definitions

The construct of Teacher Well–being is conceptualized as a multi–dimensional state that transcends the mere absence of burnout, encompassing subjective happiness, professional satisfaction, and psychological flourishing (Seligman, 2011). In the higher education landscape, this includes the ability to maintain emotional equilibrium despite the "publish or perish" culture and the evolving demands of digital pedagogy (Day & Ching, 2021). Organizational Culture is defined through the Competing Values Framework as the shared assumptions and values that govern institutional behavior, ranging from stability–oriented hierarchies to achievement–oriented market cultures (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). In private universities, this culture often dictates the "unwritten rules" of academic life, profoundly influencing how faculty members perceive their professional identity and future prospects.

Organizational Support is operationalized as the specific tangible and intangible assistance provided by the university, including technical resources, administrative ease, and socio–emotional recognition (Eisenberger et al., 1986). While culture provides the environment, support provides the tools, and both are essential for fostering faculty resilience (Granziera et al., 2022; Wongmajarapinya et al., 2024). Self–efficacy refers specifically to teachers' beliefs in their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to produce given attainments in their professional domain (Bandura, 1997). Lastly, Work Engagement is defined as a persistent and pervasive affective–cognitive state of vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Channuwong & Ruksat, 2022). These constructs are not static; rather, they are process–oriented variables that fluctuate in response to the shifting organizational landscape of private higher education in Henan.

Hypothesis Development

Organizational Culture, Support, and Well–being

The relationship between the institutional environment and individual health is well–established in organizational psychology. A supportive organizational culture that promotes

autonomy and professional collaboration is positively associated with higher levels of life satisfaction and lower rates of faculty attrition (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). When teachers perceive their university culture as "person-centered" rather than purely "task-centered," they report higher psychological safety and emotional well-being (Wang & Li, 2021). Similarly, consistent organizational support provides the resources necessary to cope with the heavy administrative and teaching loads characteristic of private universities in Henan. Perceptions of being valued by the institution directly enhance a teacher's subjective sense of flourishing (Granziera et al., 2022).

H1: Organizational culture significantly and positively influences teachers' well-being.

H2: Organizational support significantly and positively influences teachers' well-being.

The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy

According to Social Cognitive Theory, environmental factors primarily influence human affect through cognitive self-evaluations. A positive organizational culture and robust support systems provide the "verbal persuasion" and "physiological states" needed to build high self-efficacy among faculty (Bandura, 1997). In Chinese private colleges, where teachers often face job insecurity, institutional support acts as a critical source of confidence-building. High self-efficacy, in turn, allows teachers to view challenges as opportunities for mastery rather than threats, which significantly bolsters their emotional resilience and professional well-being (Hascher & Waber, 2021). This suggests that self-efficacy acts as a psychological filter through which institutional inputs are processed.

H3: Organizational culture significantly influences teachers' self-efficacy.

H4: Organizational support significantly influences teachers' self-efficacy.

H5: Self-efficacy significantly influences teachers' well-being.

H6: Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between organizational factors and well-being.

The Mediating Role of Work Engagement

The JD-R model suggests that institutional resources trigger a motivational process that leads to enhanced work engagement. When teachers in Henan perceive their organization as a supportive entity with a healthy culture, they are more likely to exhibit vigor and dedication (Schaufeli et al., 2002). This engagement is not merely a behavioral outcome but a state of professional thriving that contributes directly to long-term well-being (Day & Ching, 2021). Without high levels of engagement, the stresses of the private university sector would likely lead

to rapid burnout; thus, engagement serves as a vital bridge between the available institutional resources and the teacher's ultimate emotional state.

H7: Organizational culture significantly influences work engagement.

H8: Organizational support significantly influences work engagement.

H9: Work engagement significantly influences teachers' well–being.

H10: Work engagement mediates the relationship between organizational factors and well–being.

The Sequential Mediation Path

Empirical evidence suggests a hierarchical relationship between psychological resources and behavioral states. High self–efficacy is a prerequisite for sustained engagement, as individuals who believe they can succeed are more likely to invest significant effort into their work (Bandura, 1997). In the context of private higher education, this implies a "chain reaction" where institutional support builds efficacy, which then fuels engagement, ultimately resulting in enhanced teacher well–being. This sequential mediation reflects the complexity of the teacher's experience, where external support must first be converted into internal confidence before it can manifest as active engagement and emotional flourishing.

H11: Self–efficacy significantly influences work engagement.

H12: There is a significant chain mediating effect from organizational factors to well–being via self–efficacy and work engagement.

Conceptual Framework

This paper is a research study. The researcher defines the research conceptual framework based on the concept/theory gained from the literature survey. The proposed research model integrates these hypotheses into a comprehensive causal structure. Organizational Culture and Organizational Support are positioned as exogenous variables that represent the institutional "input." Teacher Well–being serves as the primary endogenous variable, representing the psychological "output." The internal "process" is mapped through the dual mediators of Self–efficacy and Work Engagement. The model explicitly tests the direct paths from the environment to well–being, as well as the indirect paths that reflect the motivational and cognitive mechanisms through which private university faculty in Henan navigate their professional lives. This framework allows for a rigorous testing of the "mechanism" of well–being, moving beyond simple correlations to provide a holistic view of the factors that sustain the academic profession.

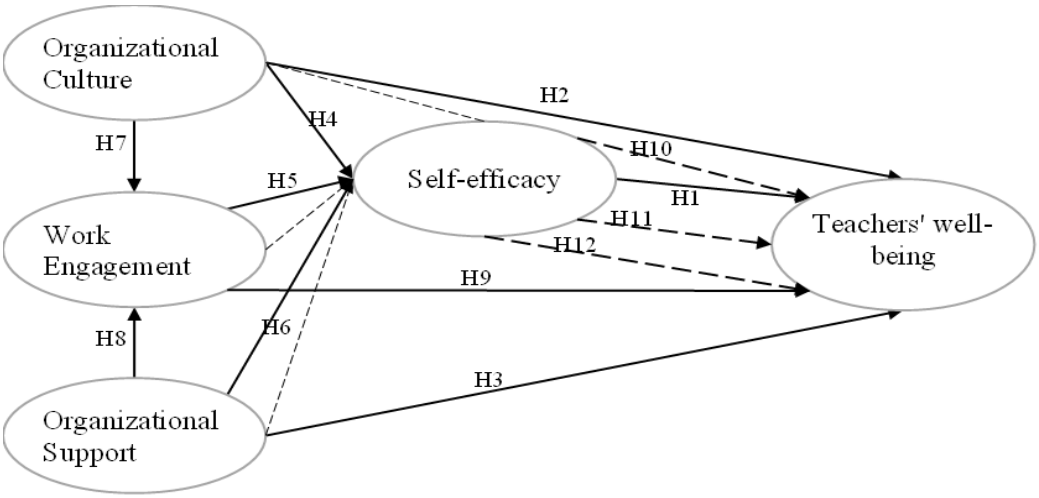


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a descriptive–correlational research design within a quantitative framework to examine the complex causal mechanisms influencing teacher well–being. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), a quantitative approach is most appropriate when the research objective is to test theories by examining the relationships among measurable variables. Specifically, a cross–sectional survey design was selected to capture a snapshot of the psychological and organizational states of faculty members at a single point in time, facilitating the analysis of patterns and associations across a large demographic (Salkind, 2017). This design aligns with the post–positivist paradigm, which seeks to provide objective, empirical evidence through structured observation and statistical verification.

The core of the methodological framework is the application of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). SEM is a powerful multivariate statistical technique that allows for the simultaneous evaluation of multiple dependent and independent relationships, including direct and indirect effects through mediating variables (Hair et al., 2019). Unlike traditional regression analysis, SEM accounts for measurement error and provides a more holistic view of the "pathways" from organizational factors (culture and support) to individual outcomes (well–being). By utilizing this advanced modeling technique, the study can rigorously test the chain mediation effects hypothesized in the previous chapter, providing a robust empirical basis for the proposed causal model.

Population and Sampling

The target population consists of full-time faculty members employed at private universities in Henan Province, China. Based on the official Educational Development Statistical Bulletin of Henan Province, the higher education sector in the province employs exactly 142,500 full-time faculty members. Within this landscape, the private sector is substantial, comprising 45 private higher education institutions that serve an enrollment of 743,000 students (Henan Provincial Department of Education, 2023). This vast and highly competitive educational environment necessitates a rigorous sampling strategy.

To determine the appropriate sample size for this defined population, the established criterion by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was applied. For a population exceeding 100,000, this statistical guideline indicates a minimum required sample of 384 participants to achieve a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Furthermore, to satisfy the specific demands of Structural Equation Modeling, a sample size exceeding 400 is strictly recommended to ensure model stability, parameter accuracy, and sufficient statistical power (Hair et al., 2019). To achieve representativeness, a multi-stage stratified random sampling technique was implemented. In the first stage, five leading private universities in the Zhengzhou metropolitan area were purposefully selected due to their structural complexity and representative size. In the second stage, participants were randomly selected from faculty rosters provided by human resources departments, stratified by academic discipline and years of service (Gay et al., 2012). A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed. After data screening, 408 valid responses were retained, yielding a strong response rate of 81.6%. This final valid sample of 408 educators comfortably exceeds both the general population representation threshold and the methodological prerequisites for robust structural equation modeling.

Instruments

Data were collected using a structured, five-point Likert-scale questionnaire, adapted from established international scales to fit the Chinese academic context. The Teacher Well-being Scale was adapted from the work of Granziera et al. (2022), focusing on dimensions of professional satisfaction and psychological flourishing. To measure Organizational Culture, the study utilized the Competing Values Framework scale (Cameron & Quinn, 2011), which assesses institutional norms across hierarchy, market, clan, and adhocracy dimensions. Perceived Organizational Support was measured using the shortened version of the Survey of Perceived

Organizational Support (SPOS) developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986), which has demonstrated high cross-cultural reliability.

For the mediating variables, Self-efficacy was assessed through the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES), which measures confidence in instructional strategies and student engagement (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Work Engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), focusing on the three pillars of vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). All instruments were translated into Chinese using a rigorous back-translation process to ensure linguistic equivalence and conceptual clarity. This process involved academic experts in educational administration to verify that the professional terminology resonated with faculty members in the Henan context.

The reliability and validity of the instruments were established through a pilot study involving 50 faculty members. Internal consistency was verified using Cronbach's Alpha, with all scales exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating high reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Content validity was ensured through expert review by a panel of five professors specializing in educational psychology and administration. Furthermore, Construct Validity was assessed during the main data analysis phase using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). This step verified that each item significantly loaded onto its respective latent construct, ensuring that the instruments accurately measured the intended psychological and organizational dimensions.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was conducted over a four-month period using an online survey platform, which allowed for efficient distribution and real-time monitoring of response rates. Cooperation was sought from the Human Resources departments of the participating universities to facilitate the distribution of the survey link via institutional communication channels. Each participant was provided with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the estimated time required to complete the questionnaire. This digital approach was chosen to minimize social desirability bias and provide respondents with a private environment to share their perceptions of institutional culture and their own well-being.

Ethical considerations remained a top priority throughout the collection phase. Participants were required to provide informed consent before accessing the survey items. Strict anonymity was guaranteed, with no personally identifiable information (such as names or specific ID

numbers) collected during the process. Data were stored on a password-protected drive accessible only to the primary researcher, fulfilling the requirements for data privacy and ethical research conduct (American Psychological Association, 2017). Participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the survey at any point without any professional or personal repercussions.

To ensure the quality of the data, several "attention check" items were embedded within the questionnaire. Responses that were completed in an unrealistically short timeframe or showed consistent straight-lining patterns were excluded from the final analysis. This rigorous cleaning process ensured that only thoughtful and sincere responses were utilized in the structural model testing. After the data collection window closed, the raw data were exported to a statistical software package for preliminary cleaning, including the treatment of missing values and the assessment of normality, which are essential prerequisites for the subsequent SEM analysis.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the collected data followed a systematic two-step approach using SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 24.0. The first stage involved descriptive statistical analysis to summarize the demographic profile of the participants and the mean levels of the primary variables. Preliminary tests for multicollinearity, normality (Skewness and Kurtosis), and common method bias were conducted. Harman's single-factor test was specifically applied to ensure that the variance in the data was not a byproduct of the self-reporting method, which is a common concern in behavioral research (Podsakoff et al., 2003). These initial steps provided the necessary foundation for more complex inferential testing.

The second stage employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the hypothesized causal relationships. Following the procedure recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), a Measurement Model was first evaluated through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to verify the factor structure of the latent constructs. Goodness-of-fit indices, including the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), were used to assess how well the model fit the empirical data. A CFI and TLI above 0.90 and an RMSEA below 0.08 were utilized as the benchmarks for an acceptable model fit (Hair et al., 2019).

Once the measurement model was validated, the Structural Model was tested to examine the direct and indirect paths among organizational culture, organizational support, self-efficacy, work engagement, and well-being. The mediation effects were scrutinized using the Bootstrapping

method (with 5,000 resamples) to calculate 95% confidence intervals for the indirect paths. This method is widely regarded as more robust than the Sobel test for detecting mediation, particularly in complex models with multiple mediators (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). This comprehensive analytical strategy allowed the study to provide a mathematically rigorous validation of the proposed "chain reaction" from institutional inputs to teacher flourishing.

Research Results

Objective 1. The results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) showed that the measurement model demonstrated an excellent fit to the empirical data: X^2/df = 2.34$, CFI = .962, TLI = .958, SRMR = .045, and RMSEA = .068. These indices meet or exceed the standard benchmarks for structural models (Hair et al., 2019), confirming that the proposed factor structure adequately represents the observed indicators. Factor loadings for all items across the five scales ranged from 0.702 to 0.940, indicating that each indicator contributes significantly to its respective latent construct without cross-loading issues.

Reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values. As shown in Table 1, all alpha and CR values exceeded the 0.70 threshold, with several reaching above 0.90, signifying high internal consistency. Convergent validity was established via the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with all constructs exceeding the 0.50 requirement. This indicates that more than half of the variance in the indicators is explained by the latent variables themselves. Discriminant validity was further verified using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, where the square root of the AVE for each construct was found to be greater than its correlation with any other variable in the model.

Table 1 Measurement Model Reliability and Validity Results

Construct	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Factor Loading Range
Organizational Culture (TOCS)	0.962	0.965	0.634	0.702 – 0.940
Organizational Support (TOSS)	0.965	0.969	0.658	0.734 – 0.917
Work Engagement (TWES)	0.960	0.964	0.625	0.717 – 0.940
Self-Efficacy (TSES)	0.963	0.967	0.645	0.754 – 0.908
Teacher Well-being (TWBS)	0.963	0.966	0.641	0.731 – 0.897

Objective 2. The results of Structural Equation Modelling showed the structural equation model accounted for a significant portion of the variance in the endogenous variables, with R^2 values for self–efficacy, work engagement, and well–being indicating moderate to high explanatory power. The analysis revealed that organizational culture has a significant positive direct effect on teacher well–being (beta = 0.221, p < .001), supporting H1. Similarly, organizational support was found to be a critical predictor of well–being (beta = 0.187, p < .001), confirming H2.

The "resource–engagement" path was particularly strong, with organizational support exerting a robust influence on work engagement (beta = 0.336, p < .001). Organizational culture also significantly predicted engagement (beta = 0.250, p < .001), underscoring the role of the institutional environment in fostering vigor and dedication. Furthermore, the results established the psychological link between confidence and action, as self–efficacy significantly predicted work engagement (beta = 0.278, p < .01). These findings suggest that while culture and support provide the foundation, the individual's internal belief system acts as the engine for professional commitment.

Table 2 Direct Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses	Relationship	Beta (β)	t–value	p–value	Result
H1	Culture ⟶ Well–being	0.221	4.82	< .001	Supported
H2	Support ⟶ Well–being	0.187	3.95	< .001	Supported
H3	Culture ⟶ Self–efficacy	0.173	3.12	< .01	Supported
H4	Support ⟶ Self–efficacy	0.281	5.41	< .001	Supported
H5	Self–efficacy ⟶ Well–being	0.165	3.08	< .01	Supported
H7	Culture ⟶ Engagement	0.250	4.33	< .001	Supported
H8	Support ⟶ Engagement	0.336	6.22	< .001	Supported
H9	Engagement ⟶ Well–being	0.189	3.47	< .001	Supported

Mediation Analysis

To systematically investigate the complex "black box" of teacher well–being, a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples was utilized. The results for hypotheses H10 to H12, which evaluate the mediating variables, are explicitly presented in Table 3.

The analysis confirmed H10, demonstrating that self–efficacy serves as a significant mediating variable between institutional antecedents (culture and support) and well–being. Additionally, H11 was supported, as the indirect effect of organizational support on well–being

through the mediating variable of work engagement was significant (beta = 0.063, p < .01), with the 95% confidence interval not crossing zero. This confirms that institutional support not only makes teachers feel better directly but also enhances their well-being by increasing their professional vitality and absorption in their work.

Furthermore, H12 was supported by the observation of a significant chain mediation effect from organizational support to well-being via the sequential path of self-efficacy and work engagement. This suggests a "psychological cascading effect" where institutional resources first bolster the teacher's self-belief, which subsequently fuels their engagement and ultimately results in a heightened state of flourishing. These findings provide a nuanced understanding of how administrators can systematically intervene at different points in the causal chain to maximize faculty health.

Table 3 Indirect Effects and Mediation Analysis (Bootstrapping)

Hypotheses	Path	Indirect Effect	Lower CI	Upper CI	Result
H10	Culture ⟶ Efficacy ⟶ Well-being	0.028	0.012	0.054	Significant
H10	Support ⟶ Efficacy ⟶ Well-being	0.046	0.021	0.082	Significant
H11	Support ⟶ Engagement ⟶ Well-being	0.063	0.034	0.105	Significant
H12	Support ⟶ Efficacy ⟶ Engagement ⟶ Well-being	0.015	0.006	0.031	Significant

Discussions

The present study aimed to elucidate the causal mechanisms sustaining teachers' well-being within private universities in Henan Province. The discussion of the findings is structured according to the two primary research objectives, synthesizing the empirical results with established theoretical frameworks.

1: Validation of the measurement models for organizational culture, organizational support, work engagement, self-efficacy, and teachers' well-being.

Based on the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), the results demonstrated that the measurement models for all five latent variables exhibited an excellent fit to the empirical data. Both reliability and construct validity (convergent and discriminant) were firmly established.

Comparing these findings with existing methodological literature, this validation underscores a critical point: although these theoretical constructs and measurement scales were primarily developed in Western contexts, they are highly applicable and measurable within the

unique environment of Chinese private higher education. The high internal consistency indicates that despite the specific socio-economic pressures of Henan's " Minban" universities, the fundamental structures of faculty psychological states remain consistent with global academic settings. The successful adaptation of these scales aligns with the rigorous psychometric standards advocated by Hair et al. (2019), providing a reliable foundational tool for future empirical investigations within similar Asian educational contexts.

2: Analysis of the causal relationships and hypothesis testing (H1–H12).

The structural equation modeling and mediation analysis confirmed all proposed hypotheses. The empirical results revealed that organizational culture and perceived organizational support have significant direct positive effects on teacher well-being (H1, H2). Furthermore, these institutional resources significantly enhanced both self-efficacy (H3, H4) and work engagement (H7, H8), which in turn directly influenced well-being (H5, H9). Crucially, the mediation analysis (H10–H12) confirmed a complex chain mediation, demonstrating that institutional support and culture foster self-efficacy, which subsequently catalyzes work engagement, ultimately leading to sustained well-being.

When comparing these outcomes with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020), the findings provide a profound psychological interpretation. In the highly marketized and competitive landscape of Chinese private higher education, a supportive organizational culture acts as a vital psychosocial resource. It effectively buffers the immense academic demands placed on educators, signaling institutional trust and mitigating the risks of occupational burnout (Day & Ching, 2021; Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Furthermore, by comparing the sequential mediating roles with Social Cognitive Theory, the results illustrate a robust " psychological cascading effect." Specifically, when private institutions in Henan provide tangible support, they directly nourish the educators' internal belief systems. This elevated self-efficacy serves as the cognitive catalyst that drives subsequent work engagement (Granziera et al., 2022). Teachers with high self-efficacy are intrinsically motivated to exhibit vigor and dedication rather than resorting to avoidance coping strategies (Kim & Asbury, 2020). Ultimately, this reveals that faculty well-being is not a passive state, but is actively constructed through sustained professional engagement, which is heavily contingent upon initial institutional backing (Hascher & Waber, 2021).

New Knowledge from Research

The principal theoretical contribution of this study is the empirical development of an integrated causal model that explicitly links macro-level institutional resources to micro-level psychological outcomes within the highly competitive context of private higher education in China. Prior research has frequently examined these constructs in isolation. However, by synthesizing the Job Demands-Resources model and Social Cognitive Theory, this research provides novel empirical evidence that a supportive organizational culture and institutional backing are necessary, but structurally insufficient on their own, to sustain teacher well-being. The core new knowledge generated by this study is the discovery of a distinct "psychological cascading effect" operating within this academic environment. The structural equation modeling confirms that external organizational resources must be internalized through a specific sequence of mediating variables to be truly effective. Specifically, the model demonstrates that institutional support first fortifies an educator's self-efficacy. This elevated self-belief then acts as the crucial cognitive engine that drives profound work engagement, which ultimately culminates in sustained psychological well-being. By validating this complex chain mediation, the study advances existing organizational behavior frameworks, proving that in resource-constrained academic environments, systematically fostering an educator's internal belief system is the definitive mechanism for translating structural support into actual professional flourishing.

Conclusion

This study successfully validated an integrated causal model of teacher well-being within the specific context of private higher education in Henan Province. The findings confirm that both organizational culture and perceived organizational support are critical structural antecedents that significantly enhance educators' psychological health. More importantly, the research establishes that these institutional resources do not operate in a vacuum; their positive impact is fully realized through a sequential mediation process involving self-efficacy and work engagement. By empirically demonstrating this psychological cascading effect, the study advances the understanding of faculty well-being beyond simple cause-and-effect relationships. It provides actionable evidence that university administrators must move beyond superficial performance incentives and strategically cultivate a supportive organizational ecosystem. Ultimately, investing in structural support mechanisms that directly nourish teachers' self-belief and professional

dedication is the most effective pathway to sustaining academic excellence and ensuring the long–term viability of private universities.

Suggestions

The results of this study strongly suggest that higher education administrators, policy makers, and educational leaders can take important action to improve teacher wellbeing, organizational effectiveness and institutional sustainability.

1) Creating Supportive Organizational Cultures

Organizational culture involves a lot more than symbols. It influences teachers' feelings, motivation, and ways of working. School leaders must grasp this. Through transparent communication, participative governance, consistent policies and respect, the cultural cornerstones will enhance well–being. The result shows that private university leaders need to intentionally foster a justice, collegiality, and empowerment psychological climate. Programs aimed at developing leadership qualities should focus on emotional intelligence, transformational leadership, and interpersonal skills.

2) Strengthening Organizational Support Systems

Research demonstrates organizational support has the highest institutional influence on wellbeing and engagement. Therefore, educational institutions must invest in a structural system that instills a culture of mentoring (formal and informal), research assistance, and recognition in policies that strike a balance between teaching and research work. Administrators should not take any punitive management style but adopt supportive supervisory practices that accept the worth of their work. The efficiency of the teacher can be improved with clear career path and feedback mechanism.

3) Promoting Work Engagement Through Autonomy and Professional Growth

Work engagement was a considerable predictor of self–efficacy and well–being. Offering more flexibility in designing lessons to teachers, reducing the net burden of administration through the provision of online tools and arranging professional learning communities. By providing opportunities for professional development in the use of digital pedagogy, research skills as well as innovative teaching strategies, it increases teacher competence and commitment.

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