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The Impact of Educational Leadership on Teacher Occupational Burnout and Its Intervention Strategies

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Abstract. Teacher burnout poses a significant challenge to global education systems, directly threatening educators' physical and mental health as well as educational quality. Therefore, this study examines the existing literature, with an emphasis on two primary forms of educational leadership, mindfulness leadership and organizationally supportive leadership, and examines their roles in alleviating teacher burnout by influencing work environments, providing resource support, and regulating communication dynamics. The results show that mindfulness leadership lowers burnout levels via direct negative effects and a complete mediation by risk perception. In contrast, organizationally supportive leadership targets different burnout types with tailored emotional and instrumental support, with communication climate as a key moderator. Based on these findings, the study proposes targeted interventions for specific burnout types, strategies to enhance educational leadership, and plans to optimize the organizational environment, offering both theoretical foundations and practical guidance for cultivating high-quality teaching teams.

Keywords: Educational Leadership, Teacher Occupational Burnout, Mindfulness-Based Leadership, Organizationally Supportive Leadership, Intervention Strategies

1. Introduction

In education systems worldwide, teacher occupational burnout continues to pose a significant challenge, with direct effects on educators' well-being, instructional quality, and student outcomes [1-3]. Chronic burnout leads to emotional exhaustion and reduced work motivation among teachers, while it indirectly influences students' learning engagement and psychological well-being, thereby hindering the healthy growth of educational ecosystems. However, educational leadership, as a key organizational factor, has not yet been fully examined in terms of its underlying mechanisms and intervention potential. Besides, traditional burnout interventions predominantly focus on individual psychological adjustment while overlooking systemic influences from organizational environments and leadership behaviors. Based on previous studies, this study examines how educational leadership can mitigate teacher burnout through workplace environment optimization, resource allocation, and communication climate enhancement. In particular, it investigates the specific impact pathways of different types of educational leadership on teacher occupational burnout, identifies strategies for targeted interventions via leadership optimization, and examines the effect of organizational environmental factors on the leadership-burnout relationship. These findings offer

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new perspectives for advancing educational leadership theory and actionable strategies to effectively alleviate teacher burnout while improving educational quality.

2. Overview of teacher occupational burnout and educational leadership

2.1. Definition and manifestations of teacher occupational burnout

Teacher occupational burnout refers to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low achievement syndrome experienced by educators under prolonged work pressure. First proposed by Freudenberger in 1974 and later formalized as a three-dimensional construct by Maslach and colleagues, is defined by emotional exhaustion, encompassing diminished emotional resources, reduced vitality, and significant work-related fatigue [4]. For instance, teachers often experience physical and mental exhaustion from chronic student management and heavy teaching loads, sometimes developing physiological symptoms like insomnia and anxiety. Depersonalization manifests as educators adopting negative, indifferent, or even cynical attitudes toward students and parents [5, 6]. In such states, teachers may overlook students' needs, adopt inflexible or impersonal instructional strategies, and diminish emotional engagement with learners. Low achievement syndrome is associated with compromised self-efficacy, in which teachers perceive themselves as unable to meet instructional responsibilities or facilitate student development, resulting in frustration [7, 8]. For example, poor student performance may lead teachers to doubt their instructional abilities, causing significant frustration. It can be seen that occupational burnout typically progresses gradually. Initially, it may appear as emotional fluctuations, but continued stress gradually intensifies burnout, potentially impairing teachers' professional identity and performance.

2.2. Definition and types of educational leadership

Educational leadership drives school and teacher development by optimizing work environments, with mindfulness leadership and organizationally supportive leadership playing particularly critical roles in mitigating teacher burnout. Mindfulness leadership, rooted in mindfulness psychology, refers to leaders demonstrating qualities like self-discipline, introspection, and present-moment focus, which enhance teacher recognition and emotional regulation capabilities [9]. In addition, mindfulness leaders typically exhibit strong self-awareness, thus allowing them to perceive emotions and thoughts clearly and avoid impulsive decisions under stress. Their empathy helps leaders address teachers' emotional needs and stay focused on current tasks, reducing concerns about past or future pressures. Most importantly, they adopt a non-judgmental acceptance approach toward teachers' shortcomings, promoting learning from mistakes rather than criticism. In contrast, organizationally supportive leadership reduces teacher stress via emotional support and practical resources, including professional development and administrative assistance [10]. This leadership approach mainly manifests through emotional support, thus enhancing teachers' sense of belonging and self-worth via regular communication, psychological counseling, and recognition. Instrumental support also helps by providing teaching materials, professional development, and reducing administrative tasks to address practical challenges. Moreover, institutional safeguards establish fair evaluation systems, promotion mechanisms, and compensation structures to ensure stable career development expectations for educators.

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3. The impact of educational leadership on teacher occupational burnout

3.1. Leadership behavior: direct and indirect effects of mindfulness leadership

Mindfulness leadership has a significant negative impact on teacher burnout. Research indicates that stronger mindfulness leadership correlates with lower teacher burnout levels ($\beta=-0.624$, $p<0.001$) [9]. Through the "mindfulness awareness-self-regulation-self-reflection-mindfulness action" mechanism, mindfulness leaders could help teachers manage negative emotions, reduce self-criticism, and prevent emotional exhaustion. For instance, when teachers encounter teaching challenges, mindfulness leaders guide them to analyze problems from a non-judgmental perspective, focusing on solutions rather than excessive self-blame. This leadership approach effectively reduces teachers' emotional exhaustion levels, enhancing their psychological resilience. Moreover, mindfulness leadership influences burnout through indirect mediating effects. Risk perception plays a full mediating role between mindfulness leadership and burnout ($\beta=-0.512$, $p<0.001$) [9]. By increasing teachers' awareness of workplace risks, mindfulness leaders encourage proactive stress management, reducing burnout occurrence. Specifically, mindfulness leaders regularly organize risk assessment and response training to help teachers identify potential stressors like student management issues and heavy teaching loads, while developing coping strategies. When teachers can clearly recognize workplace stressors and master coping methods, their anxiety levels significantly decrease, consequently reducing the incidence of burnout.

3.2. Organization support: distinct impacts of emotional and instrumental support

Emotional support greatly enhances teachers' perception of being respected and cared for, effectively reducing the risk of low achievement burnout ($OR=0.74$, $p<0.001$), with particularly pronounced effects on low achievement teachers [10]. Teachers with low achievement levels often lack confidence in their professional value, while emotional support provided through leadership recognition and peer encouragement helps them rediscover the meaning of their work, thereby enhancing self-efficacy. For instance, school administrators can regularly organize "Teacher Achievement Showcase Events" where educators share teaching outcomes and student growth cases, which not only strengthens professional pride but enhances job identification. In contrast, instrumental support significantly reduces exhaustion burnout risks by offering development opportunities and administrative resources ($OR=0.30$, $p<0.001$), addressing resource shortages faced by emotionally exhausted teachers [10]. Exhaustion-type teachers typically experience physical and mental fatigue due to excessive workloads and resource shortages. Instrumental support alleviates administrative burdens, supplies teaching resources, and streamlines instructional processes to enhance efficiency and conserve effort. For example, schools can implement digital teaching tools to streamline lesson preparation and grading workflows, saving teachers time and energy while helping them better manage work-related stress.

3.3. Communication climate: reinforcement effect of moderation

The communication climate exerts a positive moderating effect between mindfulness leadership and occupational burnout ($\beta=0.339$, $p<0.001$)[9]. Specifically, in high-communication climates, teachers are more receptive to mindfulness leadership's influence, gain greater psychological and professional resources, and consequently experience reduced emotional exhaustion. This happens because clear and effective communication promotes the flow of information, enabling teachers to

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better understand and adopt leaders' behaviors and philosophies. Conversely, in environments where communication is poor, teachers may face difficulties obtaining the support they need due to these communication obstacles, which in turn reduces the influence of mindful leadership. Key features of environments with strong communication include clear and open information exchange, accessible communication channels, reduced hierarchical obstacles, and support for teachers to express their opinions and requirements. In such environments, mindfulness leaders 'philosophies and practices are conveyed more directly and effectively to teachers, who are more willing to proactively communicate with leadership, express emotions and demands, and seek support. In low-communication climates, teachers may conceal emotions and needs due to fear of criticism or neglect, hindering the full realization of mindfulness leadership's impact. These findings demonstrate that communication climate quality directly influences leadership effectiveness, particularly in mitigating teacher occupational burnout.

4. Intervention strategies for alleviating teacher occupational burnout

4.1. Precision intervention for different types of burnout

Based on the various forms of teacher occupational burnout, customized intervention strategies should be implemented to improve teachers' job satisfaction and foster their professional growth, thereby supporting the sustainable development of schools [11].

For teachers with low achievement fulfillment (5.8%), interventions should prioritize emotional support by enhancing self-worth through leadership care and peer recognition. Specifically, a "one-on-one mentoring program" can help teachers identify strengths, while "teacher growth portfolios" allow them to track their progress. In addition, a "teacher recognition initiative" further enhances professional confidence. For burnout-prone teachers (5.0%), assistance should concentrate on practical resources, including instructional materials and lighter administrative duties, to relieve emotional fatigue. This includes optimizing workflows and implementing digital management systems to minimize time spent on administrative tasks, like automated class scheduling and online submission of teaching materials. The creation of a "teaching resource sharing platform" featuring high-quality lesson plans, courseware, and instructional videos can also reduce preparation pressures. Besides, courses should be scheduled based on teachers' expertise and workload, while "flexible work schedules" should be introduced to guarantee sufficient rest and recovery time. For moderately high burnout levels (27.1%), interventions should combine emotional support with tool-based solutions to reduce overall stress. Regular team-building activities can strengthen collaboration, while teaching resources and tools improve efficiency. A stress monitoring and early warning system should be implemented to promptly detect burnout signs and provide timely interventions. Free psychological counseling services should also be offered to help teachers effectively manage stress and enhance mental resilience.

4.2. Specific measures to enhance educational leadership

To boost educational leadership, mindfulness-based training can improve school administrators' focus and emotional regulation. And delivered through online courses linked to management performance evaluations, the program encourages leaders to apply mindfulness principles in their daily practices [12]. The program includes mindfulness meditation practices, strategies for regulating emotions, and mindful communication skills, thus effectively enhancing leaders' self-awareness and ability to manage emotions. Besides, the integration of teachers' assessments of

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leaders' mindfulness and regular case study sessions for shared learning can further enhance leadership development.

Furthermore, establishing a dual support mechanism combining "emotional support and tools" can significantly enhance educational leadership. Emotional support initiatives, such as monthly non-work-related tea sessions and teacher feedback boxes, help to strengthen educators' sense of belonging and engagement. For tool-based support, the establishment of a "Teaching Resource Development Team" allows for the continuous creation and updating of instructional materials tailored to subject-specific needs, providing comprehensive professional support. Simultaneously, the implementation of "position classification management," which categorizes teaching roles into instructional, research-oriented, and administrative types based on faculty expertise and career development plans, provides personalized career pathways. This integrated approach ensures teachers receive balanced emotional and material support, thereby boosting overall job satisfaction and team cohesion.

4.3. Auxiliary strategies for optimizing organizational environment

The optimization of the organizational environment serves as a key approach to mitigating teacher burnout, with the cultivation of risk awareness being particularly important. And the establishment of a risk feedback platform encourages educators to share workplace risk incidents and coping strategies, facilitating better identification and management of occupational stress [13]. This platform not only provides a collaborative learning space for teachers but also assists administrators in aggregating risk data and developing targeted prevention measures. To incentivize participation, implementing reward systems like awarding "Risk Prevention Excellence Certificates" or performance bonuses can enhance teacher engagement and drive comprehensive risk management improvements.

Another optimization strategy involves fostering a positive communication environment [14]. To facilitate information sharing and break down hierarchical barriers, schools should regularly organize interdisciplinary teaching salons that invite educators and educational experts from both academic and industry sectors to share teaching experiences and cutting-edge educational concepts. Meanwhile, the creation of feedback platforms allows teachers to submit recommendations on school administration and curriculum planning. In turn, the systematic evaluation and timely adoption of feasible feedback improve administrative transparency and foster greater teacher involvement. Through these strategies, organizations can create a more supportive environment that boosts teachers' sense of belonging and participation, thereby effectively reducing occupational burnout.

5. Conclusion

Through a systematic literature review, this study demonstrates that educational leadership, particularly mindfulness leadership and organizationally supportive leadership, has significant effects in mitigating teacher burnout. Specifically, mindfulness leadership reduces burnout levels via both direct negative impacts and mediation through risk perception, while organizationally supportive leadership provides targeted interventions for different burnout types through differentiated strategies of emotional and instrumental support. In addition, communication climate plays a key moderating role in this process. Consequently, intervention strategies should be tailored to specific burnout types: teachers with low achievement fulfillment require enhanced emotional support, those experiencing burnout exhaustion need focused instrumental support, and relatively

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high-burnout teachers require reinforcement of both emotional and instrumental support. school administrators should incorporate educational leadership in performance evaluations and set up teacher burnout monitoring. Moreover, educators should engage in mindfulness training and enhance communication with colleagues and supervisors. In addition, policy makers should assist schools in implementing relevant training programs, boost educational resource allocation, and improve teachers' working conditions.

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