

A STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL SUPPORT AND CAREER HAPPINESS OF TEACHERS IN R SPECIAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN CHINA

Xia Huang^{1*}

Zenghan Lee²

¹ Master Candidate in Educational Administration, Stamford International University of Thailand

² Associate Professor, Minnan Normal University, China

* **Corresponding Author, E-mail:** 752948798@qq.com

Abstract: This study aimed to investigate the career happiness of special education teachers. School support was one of the important factors affecting the career happiness of teachers, and it was also the direction that should be pursued to support the professional development of teachers in the future. This study successfully collected 144 valid questionnaires from 160 teachers in R special education institutions in China. The data analysis methods include descriptive statistical analysis, independent sample T-test, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlation analysis. Research has found that teachers' school support and career happiness in R special education institutions in China were moderate. In school support, there was no significant difference in demographic backgrounds such as gender, age, teaching years, educational qualifications, and marital status among teachers. There was no significant difference in demographic backgrounds, such as gender, age, teaching years, educational qualifications, and marital status, regarding career happiness among teachers. At the same time, there was a significant positive correlation between school support and career happiness of teachers in R special education institutions in China. Finally, based on the research findings, suggestions were made that schools should strive to establish a good physical and mental work environment and provide continuous training and learning to enhance the career happiness of teachers in R special education institutions in China.

Keywords: R Special Education Institutions in China, School Support, Teacher's Career Happiness

Introduction

In January 2020, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) released a report titled "Teachers' Happiness: A Framework for Data Collection and Analysis", which for the first time, included the evaluation of teachers' career happiness as an important content of PISA 2021. To improve the career happiness of teachers, the UK released the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy in 2019, which proposed reducing the workload of teachers, enhancing their

leadership role in school decision-making, conducting meaningful evaluations to support teacher teaching practices, providing professional cooperation time for teachers, and providing structured support for early-stage teachers for 2 years.

In China, at the national level, the CPC and state leaders paid great attention to special education. At the same time, to implement relevant policies and regulations on special education, teachers must first pay attention to the physical and mental development, and career development of special education schools. Teachers' happiness was the foundation of students' happiness and even the happiness of special education.

Therefore, it was particularly important for special education school teachers to have sufficient career happiness in their work. Since the reform and opening up, China has attached great importance to the development of special education. Special education has developed rapidly with the support of the CPC and the state. The "care for special education" proposed in the report of the 18th National Congress of the CPC provided a policy starting point for developing special education. The "support for special education" proposed in the report of the 19th National Congress of the CPC guaranteed the development of special education. The report of the 20th National Congress of the CPC had put forward specific requirements for the development of special education. All of the above reflected the state's concern for special education.

Education were Yang & Ma's research results (2022), the psychological health of special education teachers was influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors included conflicts between teachers' self-expectations and reality, role ambiguity and role conflicts, and professional knowledge and skills deficiency. External factors included occupational stress, school and social support, etc. Since schools were the main workplace for special education teachers, their work attitude and behavior were influenced by various factors such as human, financial, and material factors within the school organization. These factors form a feeling of whether teachers felt supported by the school organization, that is, perceived organizational support. This concept was commonly used to measure an organization's contribution to its members and the level of concern for their happiness. The employees perceived that the organization values their work, contribution, and happiness, which helped to enhance their sense of obligation to the organization.

According to Wang et al. (2021) showed that the supportive atmosphere of schools had a positive impact on the willingness of rural special education teachers to continue working. Therefore, based on the above research, it has been found that school support had a certain impact on the career happiness of teachers. Because of this issue, this study mainly focused on school support for special education and teachers' career happiness to improve the working conditions of special education school teachers, stimulate their work enthusiasm, and enhance their career happiness. At the same time, this also helped to understand the current situation of school support for special education and the career

happiness of teachers, providing suggestions and a basis for strengthening the development of the special education industry and further promoting the professional development of teachers in special education schools.

Research Objectives

(1) To understand the current school support and career happiness of teachers in R special education institutions in China.

(2) To identify the differences in school support in R special education institutions in China under different demographic backgrounds (gender, age, teaching years, educational qualifications, and marital status).

(3) To identify the differences in career happiness among teachers in R special education institutions in China under different demographic backgrounds (gender, age, teaching years, educational qualifications, and marital status).

(4) To explore the relationship between school support and career happiness of teachers in R special education institutions in China.

Literature Review

Research on Career Happiness of Teachers

Each scholar had a unique perspective on the definition of teachers' career happiness. In Zhang's (2020) study, teacher's career happiness referred to the positive affirmation and long-term pleasure that teachers felt when participating in educational and teaching activities related to teachers, believing that their internal needs were very satisfied and enjoyable, realizing that they had realized their work potential and improved their abilities. Everyone recognized the effectiveness of teaching, and the self-expression of teachers was positively recognized and enjoyable. Wang et al. (2020) pointed out that the career happiness of special education teachers referred to a relatively stable emotional and value experience, mainly positive experiences, generated along with the recognition and evaluation of their profession, educational and teaching activities, and professional benefits. In recent literature, Li & Li (2020) pointed out that the career happiness of teachers referred to the positive survival state that teachers could find in the professional environment, achieve their career ideals, and feel happy inner experiences. And this study cites the research of scholar Wang (2017), which stated that the career happiness of special education teachers referred to a relatively stable emotional and value experience that was mainly positive, generated by the recognition and evaluation of their profession, educational and teaching activities, and professional benefits. It was divided into five dimensions, namely emotional happiness, professional happiness, interpersonal harmony, environmental satisfaction, and physical and mental pleasure.

Teachers often need to deal with various stress situations, which affect their job satisfaction. Happiness was an important factor in reducing teacher turnover intention (Li et al., 2019), and it also affected the psychological health level, job performance, and professional identity of special education teachers (Ma & Deng, 2019; Wang, 2017). Therefore, happiness has become an important reference for measuring the stability of the teaching staff to a certain extent and an important component of teacher professional development. In addition, research has found that the level of happiness among teachers on campus was related to the academic performance of students (Briner & Dewberry, 2007), which meant that improving employee happiness was not only beneficial for employees themselves but also for the success of the organization. At the same time, it also indicated that improving teachers' career happiness helped to improve student performance and contribute to the development of the school.

Research on School Support

Research data showed that social support theory, ecosystem theory, and school climate theory were the three theoretical foundations of school support (Li et al., 2022). Each theory had a variety of explanations for the definition of the concept of school support, and each explanation had its advantages. Based on these three theories, scholars from all sides have given their definitions of school support. Wang (2017) believed that school support was the support and assistance provided by schools to enhance teachers' professional concepts, knowledge, and abilities. Specifically, it included institutional support, conditional support, activity support, management support, and cultural support. Wang & Tang (2018) believed that the school support atmosphere mainly referred to the school atmosphere perceived by teachers as friendly, cooperative, encouraging, caring, and trusting. In this atmosphere, a learning environment could be created and formed, and the school support atmosphere had an important impact on the professional development of teachers.

Zhao et al. (2019) defined "school support" as the support and assistance provided by schools as micro social support entities to promote the continuous improvement and updating of teachers' professional concepts, knowledge, and abilities. In this study, school support referred to providing teachers with various forms of support, including improving working conditions, actively solving problems, ensuring that teachers were assigned to the most suitable positions, creating a stimulating and interesting work environment, and providing continuous professional development opportunities to help teachers fully realize their potential and achieve personal and career goals.

The school atmosphere theory held that school support was a comprehensive reflection of the intrinsic values, school atmosphere, and interpersonal relationships that reflect the quality of school life. Therefore, the concept and scale of school atmosphere were commonly used to measure school support (Hu & Zhong, 2019).

In terms of measuring tools for school support, most empirical studies used subscales or indicators related to the source of support (such as teacher support, peer support, or peer support) to

measure school support. The measurement project evaluated students' reactions to statements such as "overall, adults in the school treat students fairly", "students here respect what I have to say", "my teachers were by my side when I needed them", and "other students in the school care about me" .

Other studies used the School Climate Scale to measure schools (Zhang, 2020). The measurement project evaluated students' level of identification with statements such as "My teacher cared about me," "Students helped each other," "Students had the opportunity to help make decisions," "Students felt safe in school," and "school rules were fair to every student."

Chinese researcher Cao (2016) proposed that school support included three dimensions: teacher support, peer support, and student club support, based on a combination of interpersonal support theory and social support theory. Ying (2016) concluded that the definition of university school support included professional and curriculum support, teacher teaching support, social support, learning facility support, and living facility support. But neither had developed a corresponding questionnaire. Xu et al. (2020) cited organizational support to define school support, which used the concept of organizational support to measure whether the school values its contribution to the school and the degree of care the school has for its happiness. Therefore, it used the simplified version of the Organizational Support Scale developed by Eisenberger et al., which consisted of a single-dimensional scale consisting of eight items. The School Support Questionnaire developed by scholar Wu (2011) had one dimension and a total of 5 questions. Subsequently, Wang et al. (2020) respectively cited the questionnaire in their research.

Therefore, through the literature review, it could be concluded that there was currently no comprehensive and authoritative evaluation standard for the definition and measurement tools of school support.

Research on the Relationship between School Support and Career Happiness of Teachers

The study on the impact of school support on happiness began with Cohen & Wills (1985) proposing two models (the main effect model and the buffer model) for the impact of school support on happiness. The main effect model of school support suggests that school support plays an important role in maintaining good emotions in a general state. Regardless of whether an individual was in a state of stress or not, school support always increased their sense of happiness.

The school support buffer model believed that school support could protect individuals under stress, and it indirectly had a positive impact on individual happiness through the buffer factor of individual social and psychological stimulation (Muneer et al., 2014). Meanwhile, research by Zhang (2020) believed that school support and psychological pressure were influencing factors on teacher happiness. In Wang et al.'s (2020) study on organizational support and teachers' career happiness, a questionnaire survey was conducted on 836 special education teachers. The results showed that there was a positive correlation between organizational support and career happiness, and organizational

support significantly predicted the career happiness of special education teachers. Similarly, in a survey conducted by Wang et al. (2020), 305 special education teachers in Zunyi City were surveyed for their self-evaluation of school support atmosphere, career happiness, and positive psychological qualities. The results showed that the school support atmosphere had a significant positive impact on teachers' career happiness.

Summary of the Reviewed Literature

In summary, previous studies have shown a significant positive correlation between school support for special education and teachers' career happiness. By reviewing existing research, it could be found that there was a wealth of theoretical research and role studies on school support and career happiness of teachers both domestically and internationally, laying a certain foundation for this study. However, there was not much research on school support and career happiness of teachers in the field of special education, and there was even less research on the relationship between the two. This study explored in depth the relationship between school support and career happiness of teachers in R special education institutions in China. Through analyzing and discussing the research results, targeted suggestions were finally proposed to improve the career happiness of teachers and provide assistance for the development of special education in China.

Methodology

The survey respondents of this study were teachers from R special education institutions in China, mainly studying the correlation between school support and the career happiness of teachers. As of December 11, 2023, there were 217 special education teachers in R special education institutions in China. According to the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) scale, 140 samples were required. From December 15th to December 30th, 2023, electronic questionnaires were distributed to sample teachers through the school's WeChat workgroup. 160 questionnaires were distributed, 156 were collected, and 144 valid questionnaires were retained after excluding invalid ones. The number of valid questionnaires could meet statistical requirements.

The scale tool for measuring support for special education schools in this study was derived from the "School Support Questionnaire" compiled by Wu (2011), which had one dimension and a total of 5 questions. This questionnaire adopted the Likert 5-point rating method: 5 indicated "fully agree," 4 indicated "relatively agree," 3 indicated "neutral," 2 indicated "relatively disagree," and 1 indicated "fully disagree." The theoretical moderate was 3 points. The higher the score, the more positive the school support atmosphere felt by special education teachers, and it also indicated that they had received more school support.

The questionnaire on career happiness of special education teachers in this study was developed using the format of the "Special Education Teacher Occupational Happiness Questionnaire" developed

by Wang (2017) from Beijing Normal University. There was a total of 25 questions, including 5 dimensions, namely professional happiness (questions 1-5), interpersonal harmony (questions 6-10), emotional happiness (questions 11-15), environmental satisfaction (questions 16-20), and physical and mental pleasure (questions 21-25). The questionnaire also uses the Likert 5-point scoring method, with the theoretical median value being 3 points. The higher the score, the greater the teacher's career happiness.

Through data analysis of the School Support Questionnaire and the Teacher Career Happiness Questionnaire, it could be found that Cronbach's α was 0.907. The Overall Cronbach's α of Career Happiness of teachers was 0.971, which represented Cronbach's α five dimensions of professional happiness, interpersonal harmony, emotional happiness, environmental satisfaction, and physical and mental pleasure were 0.893, 0.756, 0.903, 0.919, and 0.946, respectively. The Cronbach's α values for each variable in the scale were all above 0.7, indicating good internal consistency of the questionnaire. The KMO of the questionnaire data on school support and career happiness of teachers in R special education institutions in China was 0.955, which was greater than 0.7. The approximate chi-square value was 4294.352, corresponding to a $P = 0.000$, indicating that the scale was suitable for factor analysis. By analyzing and explaining the validity of various dimensions of school support, teachers' career happiness, and teachers' career happiness, it could be concluded that the explanation was good and could be used, indicating that the validity of the scale was very good.

Results

Demographic Analysis of Questionnaire Participants

There were 144 teachers participating in this questionnaire survey, female teachers accounted for 84.72%, while male teachers accounted for 15.78%. The number of female teachers participating was much higher than that of male teachers. R special education institutions in China belong to the scope of special education and mainly recruit preschool children, so the teachers recruited would be mainly female. Therefore, the actual number of female teachers was much greater than that of male teachers, which was consistent with the results of this study. In terms of age, 81.94% of the surveyed teachers were between the ages of 20 and 29. 17.36% of teachers were between the ages of 30-39 years old. 0.69% of teachers were 40 years old and above. It could be seen that the majority of teachers were aged 40 and below, and the age structure of teachers in R special education institutions in China was relatively young. From the perspective of educational qualifications, teachers had a master's degree, accounting for 1.39%. The proportion of teachers with a bachelor's degree was 56.25%. The proportion of teachers with specialists was 42.36%. As mentioned earlier, the enrollment target of R special education institutions in China was preschool children. At the same time, the teaching team engaged in preschool education between specialists and bachelor's degrees. Therefore, this was also consistent with

the results of this study. In terms of teaching years, three teachers are 15 years or more, accounting for 2.08%. The proportion of teachers with 11-15 years of teaching years was 1.39%. The proportion of teachers with 6-10 years of teaching years was 20.83%. The proportion of teachers with less than 5 years of teaching years was 75.69%. It indicated that the teaching years structure of R special education institutions in China was younger, and more experienced teachers needed to be added. From the perspective of marriage, unmarried teachers account for 70.14%. 27.78% of married teachers. 1.39% of divorced teachers and 0.69% of widows. It could be seen that in R special education institutions in China, the majority of teachers were unmarried, which was consistent with the fact that the overall teacher team was relatively young, as mentioned earlier.

Descriptive Statistics on the Levels of Teachers' School Support and Career Happiness

1) According to the descriptive statistical results in Table 1, the overall mean of support schools and career happiness of teachers, M and SD were observed, and the overall sample for all variables was between 3-4 points. The level of school support and career happiness of teachers in R special education institutions in China was moderate.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on School Support and Career Happiness of Teachers (N=144)

Dimension	Min	Max	M	SD	Kurtosis	Skewness
School support	1	5	3.708	0.818	0.01	-0.238
Teacher's career happiness	1	5	3.651	0.742	0.98	-0.514

Differences Analysis on the Levels of Teachers' School Support and Career Happiness

In school support, there was no significant difference in demographic backgrounds such as gender, age, teaching years, educational qualifications, and marital status among teachers. There was no significant difference in demographic backgrounds, such as gender, age, teaching years, educational qualifications, and marital status, regarding career happiness among teachers.

Correlation Analysis among School Support and Career Happiness

Pearson correlation between special education school support and career happiness of teachers was 0.838, with $P < 0.001$, indicating a significant positive correlation between special education school support and career happiness of teachers. Furthermore, from Table 4.14, it could be concluded that there was a significant correlation between school support and the five dimensions of career happiness (professional happiness, interpersonal harmony, emotional happiness, environmental satisfaction, and physical and mental pleasure), with correlation coefficient values of 0.803, 0.750, 0.793, 0.791, and 0.722, respectively. The correlation coefficient values were all greater than 0, indicating a positive correlation between school support and various dimensions of career happiness (professional happiness, interpersonal harmony, emotional happiness, environmental satisfaction, and physical and mental pleasure). The overall relevant situation was shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Correlation Analysis of Variables

	M	SD	School support	Teacher's career happiness
School support	3.708	0.818	1	
Teacher's career happiness	3.651	0.742	0.838**	1

Discussion

The Overall Level of Teachers' School Support and Career Happiness

The survey results of this study indicated that the special education teachers had a self-evaluation score of 3-4 on the School Support Scale, which was above average. In a survey conducted by Wang et al. (2021) among 350 teachers in 14 special education schools in Zunyi City, it was found that the average score of school support felt by special education teachers was 3.79, between 3 and 4, indicating that the school support felt by special education teachers was moderate. The average score of career happiness for special education teachers (M=3.82) exceeded the theoretical median, between 3 and 4, indicating that the overall situation of career happiness for special education teachers was moderate. The research was consistent with the results of this study, further confirming that special education teachers showed a moderate level of school support and career happiness of teachers. It indicated that from the perspective of the growth environment and professional development standards of teachers, the surveyed special education teachers had significant room for improvement in school support and career happiness of teachers.

The Differences Analysis on the Levels of Teachers' School Support and Career Happiness in Different Demographic Backgrounds

There was no difference between demographic backgrounds and school support and career happiness of special education teachers. In Zhang's (2020) survey on the career happiness of special education teachers in ethnic areas of Sichuan, it was found that there was no significant difference in the career happiness of special education teachers of different genders, educational qualifications, and teaching years, which was consistent with my research results. In Bi's (2020) study on the impact of organizational support on the turnover intention of construction workers, it was found that there were differences between gender, age, and organizational support. There was no difference between different years of work experience, educational qualifications, and organizational support. In a survey conducted by Liu et al. (2023) on the current status of career happiness among primary and secondary school teachers, it was found that male teachers have a higher level of career happiness than female teachers. The higher the teaching years, the higher the career happiness of teachers. In He's (2016) survey and analysis of the current status of career happiness among middle school teachers, it was found that there was no significant difference in career happiness among teachers of different genders. However, the career happiness of teachers gradually decreased with the increase of teaching years. Through comparison, it could be concluded that this result had both similarities and inconsistencies with previous

studies, which might be related to the selection of the research population. Previous studies have mainly focused on general education, while this study focused on special education, and the gender ratio difference in special education was greater than that in general education. Therefore, in this study, there was no significant difference in school support and career happiness among teachers of different genders. It also explained why it was inconsistent with previous research. It also indicated that the study had played a rich role in existing theories.

The Correlation among School Support and Career Happiness

This study indicated a significant positive correlation between school support in R special education institutions in China and teachers' career happiness. It could be observed that the higher the level of school support, the higher the level of career happiness of teachers. Previous research by most scholars has also shown that school support had a positive effect on enhancing the career happiness of teachers (Aelterman, 2007; Zhao et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021). By analyzing the correlation between the support of special education schools and the career happiness of teachers, a more detailed identification of the relationship between the two could be made, which had a significant promoting effect on improving the career happiness of teachers and developing the special education industry. It was very meaningful research.

Conclusions

1) In this survey, the participants were teachers from R special education institutions in China. The proportion of female teachers was much higher than that of male teachers, and the majority of teachers were under 30 years old. The proportion of teachers with a bachelor's degree or below was relatively high.

2) There was no significant difference in school support and career happiness among special education teachers from different demographic backgrounds (gender, age, teaching years, educational qualifications, and marital status).

3) After research, it was found that there was a significant positive correlation between school support and career happiness of teachers in R special education institutions in China. Research has shown that improving school support had a more significant effect on enhancing the career happiness of teachers. By improving school support, the professional happiness, interpersonal harmony, emotional happiness, environmental satisfaction, and physical and mental pleasure of special needs teachers could be precisely improved. For example, improving school support could increase special teachers' environmental satisfaction and career happiness.

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