

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OCCUPATIONAL BURNOUTS AND PROFESSIONAL ABILITY OF TEACHERS AT YUHUA EXPERIMENTAL SCHOOL IN LUOHE CITY, HENAN PROVINCE, CHINA

Xuke Li 1*

Xu Zheng²

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

² Lecturer, Stamford International University, Thailand, xu.zheng@stamford.edu

* Corresponding Author, E-mail: 419904892@qq.com

Abstract: This study adopted a questionnaire survey method to explore the relationship between occupational burnout and the professional ability of teachers at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province. The research results showed that the overall teachers' occupational burnout was moderate, while the professional ability was relatively high. There were significant differences in teacher occupational burnout regarding gender, age, whether to be a class teacher or not and marital status. There were also significant differences in teachers' professional abilities regarding gender, age, and whether to be a class teacher. There was a significant negative correlation between occupational burnout and professional ability. Finally, targeted suggestions were proposed. Provided psychological health support to teachers to improve their mental health level. Provided professional training opportunities to enhance the professional ability of teachers. Improved the performance reward system and stimulated teachers' enthusiasm for work. To help teachers improve their professional ability and

Keywords: Yuhua Experimental School, Occupational Burnout, Professional Ability

Introduction

reduce the occurrence of occupational burnout.

Teachers were the most crucial resource for promoting educational development, vital in fostering educational modernization and building a socialist education power. As the founders and leaders of the education industry, teachers, supported by their professional ability and teaching experience, made outstanding contributions to cultivating future talents in the country (Darling Hammond & Lieberman, 2012). Primary and secondary education was the fundamental stage of lifelong learning, and the importance of teachers was even more prominent. Education was the foundation for realizing the country's long-term development, and people's teachers were the foundation. With the changes of the times, social development became more globalized. Under Informa ionization and

intelligence background, there were higher requirements for constructing teachers, which was a rare opportunity and a great challenge for teachers (Fu & Li, 2020). Based on this, a national average education base was established, overall quality training of teachers was improved, the training of high-quality talents was strengthened, the school-running level of the whole education system was enhanced, more excellent high-quality talents were trained, and a solid foundation was laid for building a strong socialist country (Hua, 2019).

Professional ability referred to the comprehensive ability exhibited by an individual in engaging in specific professional activities, including the combination of various skills, knowledge, and literacy. These abilities not only determined whether an individual could perform his duties smoothly but reflected whether he could give full play to his potential in a specific working environment (Hu, 2019). Teachers were an essential force in determining the completion of educational and teaching objectives, and the quality of the teaching staff was the core factor determining the quality of education. The professional ability of teachers played a crucial role in the construction of the teaching staff and was one of the critical links. High-level professional ability not only made teachers better competent for their duties but also provided students with more enlightening and quality educational services (Shu & Wang, 2019). Therefore, the key to achieving sound management was enhancing primary and secondary school teachers' professional ability and strengthening the teaching staff's construction (Ding, 2021).

Although the Ministry of Education emphasized that schools should conscientiously implement and enforce teacher professional ability standards, they faced difficulties and challenges in the implementation process. Some scholars explored the factors that affected the professional ability of teachers. Xiao (2020) pointed out that the decline in teacher professional ability was influenced by multiple factors: firstly, the overall trend of teacher professional ethics was declining; Secondly, the professional knowledge structure of teachers was relatively weak; Thirdly, there was a relative lack of educational ability.

Li & Yang (2019) found that when teachers were faced with a large number of daily tasks, the evaluation requirements of teachers' professional ability in the new standard involved a large number of scientific research papers and multidisciplinary professional basic knowledge, which made it difficult for many teachers to meet the standard requirements. According to a research report on teachers' professional stress, more than 80% of teachers felt great professional stress, often leading to negative emotions such as high anxiety, which led to a certain degree of occupational burnout among teachers (Wu & Qi et al., 2019). Occupational burnout presented the physical and mental state of teachers. Due to multiple role conflicts in the teaching profession and the difficulty in satisfying individual teacher needs, teachers were more prone to occupational burnout. The teaching performance of teachers who suffered from occupational burnout would be significantly affected, affecting students' academic performance and development. This negative feedback is undoubtedly challenging to stimulate the



professional growth experience of teachers (Ding & Liu, 2020). Transforming pressure into a driving force to better complete teaching tasks was a new requirement for primary and secondary school teachers in the new era (Deng, 2019). However, immense pressure could easily create a sense of professional unfairness among teachers, reduce their professional ability, and negatively impact their physical and mental development, such as occupational burnout, so much so that it affected the completion of students and the entire educational activity (Li, Zhang & Yang, et al., 2022).

The professional ability of teachers directly impacted the quality of education, and improving their professional ability was the prerequisite and foundation for providing satisfactory education for the people (Wu, 2019). Occupational burnout brought various adverse effects to teachers. Although numerous studies have been conducted on occupational burnout by scholars both domestically and internationally, in-depth research on the relationship between occupational burnout and professional ability was relatively limited. Therefore, this study took teachers from Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province, as the research object to investigate the relationship between teacher occupational burnout and professional ability. This study aimed to effective intervention measures to prevent the occurrence of teacher occupational burnout and assist teachers in improving their professional ability levels.

Research Objectives

- (1) To understand the current occupational burnout and professional ability among teachers at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province.
- (2) To analyze the differences in occupational burnout and professional ability of teachers at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province, based on demographic backgrounds such as gender, age, whether to be a class teacher or not and marital status.
- (3) To explore the relationship between occupational burnout and the professional ability of teachers at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province.

Literature Review

Research on Occupational Burnout

There were relatively affluent research results on teacher occupational burnout both domestically and internationally, mainly divided into the following three research directions: Research on the concept of occupational burnout, Research on the structure of occupational burnout, and Research on the influencing factors of occupational burnout.

The concept of occupational burnout was first proposed by New York-based clinical psychologist Freudenberger (1974). According to his research, occupational burnout was caused by individuals enduring occupational pressure for an extended period, making it difficult to alleviate and

eliminate tension effectively. Ultimately, it manifested as a series of negative symptoms, including physical and mental exhaustion, indifference towards people and things, loss of work enthusiasm, decreased professional ability, and a sharp decline in the sense of achievement. Afterwards, research on occupational burnout continued to expand and extend, and the definition of occupational burnout has always been subjective. Many researchers defined and interpreted it based on different thinking paths or research perspectives (Shirom, 2004).

The definition of occupational burnout by American social psychologists Maslach & Jackson (1981) has been widely recognized by scholars. They thought occupational burnout appeared in the work that serves people, and individuals showed symptoms such as deindividuation, emotional exhaustion, and decreased sense of accomplishment. Guan (2019) pointed out that teachers' occupational burnout was a state of exhaustion perceived by individuals psychologically and physically, which was produced when teachers were difficult to actively cope with and deal with work burdens, pressures, and difficulties. Qu & Shao (2021) concluded that from the formation background, occupational burnout resulted from individual work coping failure. From the performance symptoms, occupational burnout was a negative manifestation of a unique body and mind. From the development process, occupational burnout was formed by gradual development in a specific environment.

There were two opinions on the structural division of occupational burnout. One was one-dimensional, and the other was three-dimensional. Single dimensionality regarded occupational burnout as a whole, consisting of three components: physiological, emotional, and spiritual, and this composition did not change with the degree of occupational burnout. Representative scholars mainly included Shirom (2004). The theory of dimensionality was the most widely recognized and accepted. Maslach & Schaufeli et al. (2001) were typical representatives of the three-dimensional theory. In this study, occupational burnout was divided into three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, low achievement, and deindividuation. An occupational burnout questionnaire (Maslach Burnout Inventory, MBI) was constructed.

To better adapt to China's national conditions and cultural and educational characteristics, domestic scholars had also developed and revised an occupational burnout scale that was in line with the characteristics of Chinese teachers. Xu & Ji et al. (2004) divided teachers' occupational burnout into four dimensions: job powerlessness, physical and mental exhaustion, lack of accomplishment, and alienation and indifference, and investigated the occupational burnout of primary and secondary school teachers in China from these four aspects. The reliability and validity of the scale were tested in the study, and the results confirmed that the scale had good reliability and validity. Wu & Qi et al. (2016) reflected the characteristics of China's education, combined with the unique characteristics of China's teachers, and further systematically compiled an occupational burnout questionnaire for primary and secondary school teachers suitable for the overall characteristics of China's primary and secondary

school teachers.

The influencing factors of occupational burnout were mainly divided into two aspects: internal factors and external factors. Internal factors mainly refer to the influence of teachers' characteristics on occupational burnout, and scholars' research primarily focused on demographic backgrounds, teacher personality traits, and other aspects. Regarding gender, Li (2018) pointed out that males were relatively lower than females regarding the emotional exhaustion dimension of occupational burnout. However, regarding deindividuation and standard achievement dimensions of occupational burnout, men had a higher level than women. Wu & Qi et al. (2019) believed that with the gradual growth of the teaching age, the level of teachers' occupational burnout showed a trend of "first decreasing and then increasing". Personality traits. Chen & Luo et al. (2022) discussed the relationship between personality characteristics, coping styles, and teachers' occupational burnout, and there was a significant positive correlation between neurotic personality, negative coping, and occupational burnout. Negative coping played a partial mediating role in the relationship between neurotic personality and teacher occupational burnout.

External factors mainly included the impact of the work itself and organizational aspects. The impact of work itself on occupational burnout was mainly manifested in two aspects: workload and job requirements. The effect of workload on occupational burnout was manifested primarily because a large amount of workload prolonged working hours, directly affecting occupational burnout (Zhang, 2019). Organizational aspects. Maslach & Jackson (1981) found that an organization's fair procedures and resource allocation methods directly affected the occurrence of individual occupational burnout, manifested in deindividuation and emotional exhaustion. Insufficient resources and support the organization provides could seriously affect occupational burnout, especially the lack of material and spiritual support.

Research on Professional Ability

There were abundant research achievements on teachers' professional ability at home and abroad, which were divided into the following three research directions: first, the concept of professional ability; Second, the structure of professional ability; Third, the influencing factors of professional ability.

The concept of professional ability. Professional ability was a specific form of ability that referred to the subjective qualities and skills when engaging in a particular industry or related profession. This ability was a comprehensive expression of the knowledge, skills, experience, and attitude required by an individual in a specific occupation according to the requirements of a particular field, which was embodied in the general ability, critical ability, and apparent ability closely related to the occupation (Pan, 2021). Professional ability was a fundamental concept in vocational education research and a widely applied concept in vocational education research (Zhao, 2020). Educational

researchers paid attention to the word "professional ability" mainly for two reasons: first, it reflected the training goal of vocational education, that was, to cultivate students' professional skills and accomplishments needed in specific vocational fields; Secondly, it was influenced by the national policy orientation (Yang, 2022).

The professional ability structure can be mainly divided into two types, namely the "grid format" represented by Germany and the "concentric circle style" represented by the United States (Wei, 2022). "Net format" took content and nature as the line, introducing critical abilities to weave the net. As mentioned earlier, professional ability could be divided according to the content and nature of different professional abilities. First of all, from the content division, professional ability included professional, social and methodological ability. Secondly, from nature, the professional ability can be divided into professional essential ability, social critical ability and method key ability. American vocational education attached importance to career development, and the "concentric circle" took a career as the core. Professional ability included all occupations, specific occupations, and specific industries (Xu, 2022).

Chinese scholars also conducted in-depth research on the structure of professional ability. Fu & Yu (2022) analyzed the professional role positioning as the focus and found that the composition of an individual's professional ability could be briefly summarized into three key aspects. The first was the ideological and political standard, considered the essential work condition. Secondly, work and business ability constituted the primary platform of individuals. Finally, it was the personality motivation system which guaranteed individual professional ability. Xu (2022) conducted an in-depth study on teachers' professional ability and proposed that teachers' professional ability specifically covered eight aspects, including daily affairs management ability, teaching guidance ability, academic planning guidance ability, mental health education ability, and ideological and political education ability, etches basis, he compiled a questionnaire on teachers' professional ability and investigated teachers' professional ability in colleges and universities. After testing, the questionnaire was reliable and valid, reflecting teachers' professional ability.

Ma & Pu et al. (2020) believed that the factors affecting the improvement of professional ability included: First, the applicability of the management and assessment system formulated by the state was lacking and still needed to be improved and adjusted; Second, the recruitment system and training plan of colleges and universities needed to be changed; Third, teachers' problems, that was, there were obvious deficiencies in self-cognition, learning, and creativity. Hua et al. (2020) pointed out that archers' professional ability was mainly related to three aspects. At the school level, it was necessary to actively promote the process of building teachers' professional teams so that teachers' comprehensive ability and political literacy could be improved; the influencing factors of teachers' professional ability could be roughly divided into external factors and internal factors, including policies, environment, resources,



institutional mechanisms, and individual knowledge structure, practical experience, and professional experience, etc. These factors jointly shaped and influenced teachers' ability levels in professional development. The role of the environment mainly referred to the degree of identification with the school and the cultural atmosphere of the school.

Research on the Relationship between Occupational Burnout and Professional Ability

In her research, Jin (2018) surveyed the influencing factors of teacher professional ability. Research found that the professional ability of teachers was influenced by multiple factors, which could be divided into three levels. Firstly, school regulations and rules involved internal management systems and normed within the school. These regulations directly affected the working environment and teaching methods of teachers. Secondly, there was professional identity and value among teachers and mission and responsibility towards the education industry. Finally, teachers experienced professional exhaustion, the physical and mental exhaustion caused by long-term job pressure and burden.

Li & Zhang et al. (2022) found in the investigation of the relationship between occupational burnout and the professional ability of primary and secondary school teachers that in occupational burnout, teachers' emotional exhaustion and personal sense of accomplishment were relatively low, while deindividuation was relatively high. Teachers' occupational burnout involved many factors, including personal factors, job pressure, overload, salary, and limited promotion space. Among them, the typical manifestation of occupational burnout was the perfunctory work attitude and scattered work behavior caused by high personal psychological pressure. Based on this, improving the professional ability of primary and secondary school teachers could effectively prevent the occurrence of occupational burnout and provide educators with a work environment that is more conducive to personal growth (Yang et al., 2020).

Methodology

The subjects of this study were teachers of the Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province. The total number of teachers in Huayu Experimental School of 145, and the sample size standard of Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The final sample number of 98 was reasonable. Electronic questionnaires were distributed to teachers by the faculty and staff of the school, and 98 valid questionnaires were recovered.

Based on relevant research on occupational burnout, this study adopted Maslach & Schaufeli. The Teacher occupational burnout Inventory (MBI-ES) was developed in 2001. The questionnaire divides occupational burnout into three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, low achievement, and deindividuation, with 22 items.

Based on the related research on professional ability, this study finally adopted the questionnaire of teachers' professional ability compiled by Xu (2022), which divided teachers'

professional ability into eight dimensions: ideological and political education ability, daily affairs management ability, teaching guidance ability, academic planning guidance ability, mental health education ability, crisis response capability-ability, professional growth ability, and work innovation ability, with a total of 58 items.

Results

Demographic Analysis of the Respondents

This study took teachers from Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province, as the research object and conducted a demographic background analysis on 98 valid data collected, including the distribution of demographic backgrounds such as gender, age, whether a class teacher or not, and marital status.

The specific sample size of the participants in this survey for different demographic backgrounds was as follows: regarding gender, there were 47 male teachers, accounting for 48% of the total sample size, and 51 female teachers, accounting for 52% of the total sample size; Regarding age, there were 28 teachers under the age of 25-35, accounting for 28.6% of the total sample size, 52 teachers under the age of 35-45, accounting for 53.1% of the total sample size, and 18 teachers aged 45 and above, accounting for 18.4% of the total sample size. It can be seen that the construction of the teacher team at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province, was relatively young and middle-aged, with teachers under the age of 35-45 being the backbone of the teacher team. Regarding whether or not to serve as class teachers, 33 people served as class teachers, accounting for 33.7% of the total sample size, while 65 people did not serve as class teachers, accounting for 66.3% of the total sample size. Regarding marital status, there were 62 married teachers among the participants, accounting for 63.3% of the total sample size and 19 unmarried teachers, accounting for 19.4%. And 17 divorced or widowed teachers, accounting for 17.3% of the total sample size. It can be found that the proportion of married teachers in the teaching staff of Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province, was relatively high.

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

(1) Descriptive statistical analysis of the current occupational burnout among teachers at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province

This study used descriptive statistical methods to analyze the current occupational burnout among teachers at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province. As shown in Table 1, the overall teacher occupational burnout at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province, M was 2.88, and the means of each dimension were between 2.73 and 3.02, indicating that the overall teacher occupational burnout was moderate.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Occupational Burnout of Teachers (N=98)

Dimension	Mean	SD
Emotional exhaustion	3.02	0.98
Low achievement	2.73	0.77
Deindividuation	2.86	1.01
Overall occupational burnout	2.88	0.63

(2) Descriptive statistical analysis of the current professional ability of teachers at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province

As shown in Table 2, teachers' overall level of professional ability at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province, was M=3.81, with M values in various dimensions ranging from 3.71 to 4.04. The overall level and dimensions were higher than the theoretical mean of 3, indicating that teachers' overall level of professional ability at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province, was relatively high.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Professional Ability of Teachers (N=98)

Dimension	Mean	SD
Ideological and political education ability	3.82	0.52
Daily affairs management ability	3.77	0.56
Teaching guidance ability	4.04	0.54
Academic planning guidance ability	3.85	0.56
Mental health education ability	3.79	0.64
Crisis response capability	3.76	0.79
Professional growth ability	3.74	0.57
Work innovation ability	3.71	0.47
Overall professional ability	3.81	0.43

Differential Analysis

This study used an independent sample T-test and one-way ANOVA to analyze the differences in teachers' occupational burnout and professional ability in different demographic backgrounds (gender, age, whether to be a class teacher or not, marital status).

There were significant differences in occupational burnout among teachers at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province, regarding gender, age, whether to be a class teacher or not, and marital status.

There were significant differences in the professional ability of teachers regarding gender, age, and whether to be a class teacher or not.

Correlation Analysis

This study used Pearson correlation analysis to analyze the relationship between occupational burnout and the professional ability of teachers at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province. As shown in Table 3, the correlation coefficient between teacher occupational burnout and

professional ability was r=-0.286, reaching a significant level (p<0.01). Overall, there was a significant negative correlation between occupational burnout and professional ability among teachers at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis of Occupational Burnout and Professional Ability among Teachers

	Correlation	Occupational Burnout
Professional Ability	Correlation Coefficient	-0.286**
	P value	0.000

Discussion

Current Occupational Burnout and Professional Ability of Teachers in Yuhua Experimental School, Luohe City, Henan Province

According to the results of this study, the overall level of occupational burnout among teachers at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province, was below average. The study analyzed the reasons for the formation of this situation. The emotional exhaustion was relatively high, possibly due to increased educational job pressure. Teachers needed to face multiple expectations from students, parents, and schools, leading to excessive consumption of psychological resources and difficulty in timely recovery. The deindividuation might have reflected teachers' loss of enthusiasm and motivation for work, which could have been related to the monotonicity or lack of challenge in the working environment and work content.

According to the results of this study, the overall professional ability of teachers at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province, was relatively high. The study analyzed the reasons for the formation of this situation. The teaching guidance ability was relatively the highest, which might have been because schools paid attention to the construction of the teaching guidance system and provided practical training and support, enabling teachers to perform well in this respect. It also reflected that teachers had specific experience and professional knowledge in classroom teaching. The high ability of academic planning guidance could have skipped the school's relatively sound educational planning system, allowing teachers to effectively guide students in planning their intellectual development. At the same time, it could have reflected the importance of the school to students' comprehensive quality.

Differences in Demographic Backgrounds of Occupational Burnout and Professional Ability among Teachers at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province

According to the study results, significant gender differences were observed in teacher occupational burnout and professional ability among teachers at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province. Male teachers had a relatively higher level of professional ability than female teachers. This research results aligned with existing studies (Li et al., 2022). The study analyzed and

discussed the reasons for this difference. Female teachers were more prone to occupational burnout compared to their male counterparts. Females aced more pressure and expectations in society and the workplace, making them more likely to feel tired and consume psychological resources.

According to the study results, a significant difference was found in the age of teachers regarding occupational burnout and professional ability among Yuhua Experimental School teachers in Luohe City, Henan Province. Teachers under 35-45 generally had relatively high levels of professional ability, while teachers over 35 were more prone to occupational burnout. This research result was consistent with existing studies (Wu, Qi & Yan, 2019). The study analyzed and discussed the reasons for this difference. The professional ability level of teachers aged 35-45 was relatively high, possibly because teachers of this age group had worked in the field of education for a period and accumulated rich professional knowledge and teaching experience, thus showing excellent professional ability.

Relationship between Occupational Burnout and Professional Ability of Teachers at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province

According to the results of this study, teacher occupational burnout and professional ability had a significant negative correlation. This research result was consistent with Yang, Li, Fan & Li (2020). The study analyzed and discussed the results of this research. First, the stress and fatigue teachers faced in their work might have led to emotional exhaustion, making them feel tired and over-consumed psychological resources, which affected their occupational burnout. Secondly, the decrease in work efficiency and lack of a sense of accomplishment might have been caused by work stress and psychological fatigue, increasing the appearance of low achievement. Once again, the phenomenon of teachers lacking work enthusiasm and motivation and being indifferent to work might have been one of the manifestations of occupational burnout. This change in attitude might have been due to the accumulation of long-term work stress and fatigue. In addition, the teaching guidance and academic planning abilities in the professional ability of teachers might have helped them more effectively cope with job pressure, improve work efficiency, and thus reduce the occurrence of occupational burnout. Finally, teachers with solid mental health education abilities might have helped them better cope with psychological pressure at work, thus alleviating emotional exhaustion. Generally speaking, there was a significant negative correlation between teachers' occupational burnout and professional ability in Yuhua Experimental School, Luohe City, Henan Province. Through this negative correlation, the study aimed to help teachers improve their professional ability, reduce job pressure and fatigue, provide them with mental health support, and implement other measures to help then reduce teachers' occupational burnout.

Conclusions

1) The overall level of occupational burnout among teachers at Yuhua Experimental School in



Luohe City, Henan Province, was moderate. The overall professional ability of teachers was at a high level.

- 2) There were significant differences in occupational burnout among teachers at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province, regarding gender, age, whether to be a class teacher or not, and marital status. There were significant differences in the professional ability of teachers regarding gender, age, and whether to be a class teacher or not.
- 3) There was a significant negative correlation between occupational burnout and professional ability among teachers at Yuhua Experimental School in Luohe City, Henan Province.

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