

## **A STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP AND OCCUPATIONAL HAPPINESS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN KUNMING, YUNNAN PROVINCE, CHINA**

**Yuanyuan Wang** <sup>1\*</sup>

**Xu Zheng** <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Master Candidate in Educational Administration, Stamford International University of Thailand

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer, Stamford International University of Thailand, xu.zheng@stamford.edu

\* Corresponding Author, E-mail: 1136151527@qq.com

**Abstract:** This study aimed to determine the relationship between primary school teachers' leadership and occupational happiness in Kunming, Yunnan Province. By convenient sampling, this study selected 229 teachers from primary schools in Kunming, Yunnan Province. Descriptive statistics, independent sample T-test, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlation analysis were used to explore the relationship between leadership and occupational happiness of primary school teachers. The overall primary school teachers' leadership was high, among which academic leadership was the highest and value leadership was the lowest. Primary school teachers' occupational happiness was moderate, among which the work emotion was the highest, and the salary and benefits was the lowest. There were significant differences in the leadership and occupational happiness of primary school teachers according to the demographic background (gender, teaching age, whether to serve as a class teacher or not, and professional title). There was a significant positive correlation between primary school teachers' leadership and occupational happiness in Kunming, Yunnan province. Finally, effective measures to improve the leadership and occupational happiness of primary school teachers of different categories are proposed, and personalized support and training are provided to enhance teachers' leadership, establish clear self-worth cognition, and enhance teachers' occupational happiness.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Occupational Happiness, Primary School Teachers

### **Introduction**

All over the world, educational circles in various countries have introduced and disseminated international knowledge systems and thinking tools to build a multi-dimensional talent field space in an innovative, multi-dimensional, happy, and practical way, actively plan professional leadership, and enhance occupational happiness (Harry, 2008). China, on the other hand, was determined to train teachers to have the awareness and concept of leadership development so that they could automatically

practice teaching leadership development, and then form professional development awareness in advance, which has become the core issue of education and teaching work (Wu, 2018). Taking the breakthrough of teachers' leadership development, combined with the development trend of the times, promoting teachers' occupational happiness based on the concept of enlightenment of core literacy and cultivating characteristic needs was not only the value orientation and focus of the teacher education policy of the Party and the government, but also the ardent expectation of the country, society and families under the traditional culture of respecting teachers and attaching importance to teaching, and it was also a key hot spot in the field of educational research in the pursuit of the long-term goal of educational modernization in 2035 (Li & Gai, 2022).

With the improvement of people's quality of life, educational standards had higher requirements in all sectors of society and even in every family. It had also brought more significant pressure to the education sector, and expectations for teachers had increased accordingly. From literature research, it could be found that the long hours of work and heavy tasks faced by primary school teachers have led to a gradual decrease in their job satisfaction, an expansion of occupational burnout, and even some negative work situations, which have affected the quality of teaching (Wang, 2019). As the core force of education, the teachers' happiness index has a vital impact on the stability of the education team and the quality of education. Therefore, it was necessary to attach great importance to and strive to enhance the occupational happiness of primary school teachers (Liang, 2020).

Love was the foundation of education, the soul and vitality source, and the communication bridge between teachers and students (Liu, 2019). Only by genuinely loving educational work can one touch the core of education. The protagonist of education was students, and we should recognize each student's unique potential and respect their individuality. Although there are many reasons why teachers choose to work, it was undeniable that many teachers also decided their jobs out of love for their work. Job satisfaction was a vital criterion for measuring occupational happiness. If teachers' spiritual needs are lacking for a long time, it might lead to job burnout and even teacher loss (Mayila, 2019).

Teachers' occupational happiness index was related to the construction and stability of the teaching team, affecting the quality of education. Therefore, it was essential to pay attention to and enhance the occupational happiness of primary school teachers. In their work, teachers were deeply aware of everything organized by hierarchical control in schools. To develop, they must jump out of the teaching life circle, improve their self-leadership level as much as possible, and then find other development directions (Xue, 2020). China's current practice of learning-oriented campuses emphasizes the shared vision of schools, teacher leadership, interpersonal relationships, evaluation systems, learning support, and teacher-student relationships, all of which positively impact teacher leadership and occupational happiness. The value designed to meet the needs of society was external, and the value created to meet the needs of subjects was intrinsic. It was significant for the practical reform of primary

education to practice and improve teachers' leadership to enhance educational effectiveness and to increase teachers' psychological feelings of subjective initiative, professional identity, and teaching value (Gao, 2020).

Based on this, this study took the relationship between primary school teachers' leadership and occupational happiness in Kunming, Yunnan Province, as the main research content, investigated the current situation of primary school teachers' leadership and occupational happiness, the differences in demographic background and their relationship through empirical research, and finally put forward some suggestions from the perspective of primary school teachers' leadership to promote occupational happiness, which could carry out new teaching ideas for frontline teachers to improve their "ability and psychology" in the new era.

### **Research Objectives**

(1) To understand the current leadership and occupational happiness among primary school teachers in Kunming, Yunnan Province.

(2) To analyze the differences in leadership and occupational happiness among primary school teachers in Kunming, Yunnan Province, among different demographic backgrounds (gender, teaching age, whether to serve as a class teacher, and professional titles).

(3) To explore the relationship between leadership and occupational happiness among Kunming, Yunnan Province primary school teachers.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Research on Teacher Leadership***

In early research, Leithwood & Duke (1999) identified six types of leadership: teaching, change, ethics, participation, management, contingency, and inertia. Teacher leadership was closely related to teaching and participating in leadership, usually focusing on teacher behavior, as the activities that teachers engaged in indirectly affected the growth of students. Subsequently, Lieberman et al. (2002) divided the composition of teacher leadership into the following components:

The ability to get along harmoniously, be friendly with other teachers and have good relationships with each other. Rapid response to emergencies. The efficiency of collecting and analyzing information was guaranteed. It was being able to fully tap and utilize the human and material resources that one possesses. It could drive the development and progress of others. In addition, Chinese scholars have summarized the elements of teacher leadership based on previous research. Weng (2016) believed that teacher leadership was reflected in the interaction between teachers and students, other teachers and schools, and was composed of elements such as change, control, innovation, learning, communication, and leadership. Peng (2017) believed that there were four core elements of teacher

leadership, including the ability of teachers to develop themselves, shape themselves, teach students, lead colleagues and teachers, and seek leadership advice.

Sun & Cheng (2019) believed that "teacher leadership" was a comprehensive and holistic effect formed by the influence of teachers on others. It was a concentrated reflection of extensive abilities and an internal force accelerating change and development. Li (2019) believed that teacher leadership refers to teachers' ability to influence students, colleagues, and schools based on their professional knowledge and literacy. Teacher leadership was essentially a type of influence on teachers, including teaching leadership, academic leadership, and valuing leadership.

Research on the measurement and influencing factors of teacher leadership. Wang et al. (2020) compiled a teacher leadership questionnaire by studying the measurement tools of teacher leadership and referring to the survey report of Teacher Leadership Model Standard. They investigated teachers' leadership in participating in school management and curriculum teaching decision-making. Li & Zhu (2022) also referred to the Teacher Leadership Model Standard, compiled a questionnaire for middle school teachers, and divided teacher leadership into three aspects: teaching leadership, academic leadership, and value leadership, which achieved good research results after inspection. In addition, some scholars refer to the questionnaire compiled by the Five Forces Model of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. According to the "Five Forces Model" of leadership of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Liu (2019) divided teachers' performance in classroom leadership into six aspects. The second type was a questionnaire developed based on the Washington Teacher Leadership Model Standards.

Zhou et al. (2022) found that teachers' perception of teacher leadership was at a medium level as a whole, and the perception level was the lowest in the dimension of "participation." At the same time, school nature, administrative position, and educational background significantly affect teachers' perception of teacher leadership. It was suggested that teachers' leadership should be comprehensively improved by perfecting the professional learning community, enhancing teachers' participation in school affairs, and strengthening the construction of teachers' morality and style.

Research on strategies for improving teacher leadership. Gao (2022) pointed out that the Internet age undoubtedly provided a broader stage for developing young teachers' leadership and brought higher challenges and requirements. As the backbone of education, the leadership level of young teachers was directly related to the quality of school education and the effectiveness of the learning community. Therefore, it was particularly vital to leverage the advantages of the times to assist young teachers in self-improvement. Young teachers should gradually be encouraged to improve their leadership skills in daily teaching management work. It could improve their professional competence and leadership ability and enhance the overall quality of education in the school. By participating in teaching management, curriculum design, and student guidance, young teachers better understand the whole picture of school operation, thus cultivating a more forward-looking and innovative

leadership style. Wang & Gao (2022) believed that to realize the vital mission of "rejuvenating the country through science and education and strengthening the country with talents," we should give full play to the leadership ability of backbone teachers and promote the implementation of education and teaching practice. It was necessary to elaborate on the training strategies of the leadership of backbone teachers in information technology from school guarantees and teachers' self-improvement. Hao (2022) found in a survey that there was not much difference in the understanding of teacher leadership between urban and rural primary school teachers. Teacher leadership has not attracted the attention of education departments and schools. It was recommended to encourage frontline teachers in urban and rural areas to participate in school management, increase opportunities for experience exchange between new and old teachers, and enhance the occupational happiness of urban and rural teachers. Urban and rural primary school teachers should build or optimize learning communities independently. In addition, the education department should also provide guarantees for urban and rural primary school teachers.

### ***Research on Teacher's Occupational Happiness***

In recent years, scholars at home and abroad have explored teacher occupational happiness. For example, Zhang (2021) summarized the concept of teacher occupational happiness. She believed that teacher occupational happiness refers to the satisfaction of teachers' needs in their work, the realization of their career ideals, the full realization of their potential, and the attainment of sustained happiness. In addition, Cao et al. (2022) believed that teachers' occupational happiness refers to a kind of psychological satisfaction and pleasure, including psychological, emotional, and social happiness, when teachers communicate with principals, colleagues, parents, or students.

Research on measurement and influencing factors of occupational happiness. Many researchers use the happiness scale as a measurement tool and have revised it to form a new one. Some researchers have also developed new scales based on the influencing factors of occupational happiness as the measurement dimension. For example, the "Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)," produced by American psychologist Dawis contained 26 dimensions and sub-dimensions, such as skill requirements, promotion opportunities, and remuneration levels. This scale could evaluate occupational happiness from various angles. In the following years, this scale was widely used in the research and practice of teacher occupational happiness. Based on the investigation of teachers' positive emotional experience and cognitive evaluation of their work, Zheng & Zhou (2017) verified that teachers' occupational happiness originated from the working environment and place and was essentially the embodiment of subjective happiness. Researcher Wang (2020) focused on the main dimensions of psychological happiness, emotional happiness, cognitive happiness, and social happiness and elaborated on the occupational happiness of teachers from a multidimensional perspective.

Research on the current and influencing factors of occupational happiness. Foreign scholars have explored the factors that affect the occupational happiness of teachers from many different

perspectives. Zhang & Jin (2013) proposed that factors such as gender, regional differences, age, and economic compensation could affect the occupational happiness of teachers. Hu (2015) pointed out that professional identity, professional situation comfort, education and teaching satisfaction, and interpersonal harmony play a vital role in teachers' occupational happiness. In the field of teachers' occupational happiness, an authoritative researcher Wang (2007), believed that to improve teachers' occupational happiness, it should pay attention to the influence of internal and external supportive factors on teachers' occupational happiness, such as policy support and competency. On this basis, he also emphasized the need to enhance professional identity, improve occupational burnout, reduce occupational stress, and strengthen the protection of external factors. Wei et al. (2018) pointed out that job remodeling also affected teachers' occupational happiness. Work reshaping refers to one's ability to respond to work and make corresponding adjustments promptly and proactively. In addition, the study by Xu et al. (2022) showed that effective emotional regulation could effectively enhance the occupational happiness of teachers. Gao (2020) believed that the subjective factors influencing teachers' occupational happiness are their internal professional motivation, physical and mental health, and self-realization. The objective factors were the management style of school leaders, salary, interpersonal relationships among colleagues, workload and nature of work, social support, understanding degree of parents and students, etc. In addition, Liu & Wang (2021) believed that school management mode, social status, work income, and workload would impact teachers' occupational happiness.

#### ***Research on the Relationship between Teacher Leadership and Occupational Happiness***

The research results on primary school teachers' leadership and occupational happiness were scarce; most respondents were college teachers. In contrast, the research on primary school teachers was still blank. Nevertheless, many studies have shown a correlation between leadership and occupational happiness. Wang et al. (2020) put forward the influence of principals' teaching leadership on teachers' happiness and their action path. Through principals' teaching leadership, they focused on creating a supportive and cooperative school community culture atmosphere, developing distributed teaching leadership, empowering teachers to enhance their collective efficacy and self-efficacy, and promoting teachers' happiness. Zhu (2018) proposed a significant positive correlation between leadership and occupational happiness, and the influence dimension in leadership had a significant predictive effect on occupational happiness. Lv (2021) studied the leadership of primary school teachers. She expounded on the research results that improved teachers' leadership helped build high-quality teachers and enhanced teachers' sense of accomplishment, mission, and happiness. Liu (2014) proposed a survey on the occupational happiness of primary and secondary school teachers to help them understand themselves, reflect on themselves, and re-understand the significance of their professional lives. At the same time, it could enhance the occupational happiness of primary and secondary school teachers, comprehensively improve their leadership level, and improve the quality of education (Pang

et al., 2017).

## **Methodology**

The overall subject of this study was primary school teachers in Kunming, Yunnan Province, China. This study adopted a convenient sampling method and completed sampling in Kunming Hongqi Primary School, Yunnan University Affiliated Primary School, and Kunming Wucheng Primary School. In the formal investigation stage, questionnaires were distributed to primary school teachers in three schools in Kunming through liaison personnel from each school. There were 587 primary school teachers in the three schools. According to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Morgan Scale research sample size standard, they distributed 230 questionnaires. In the end, 229 valid questionnaires were collected, and the adequate response reached 99.57%. The teacher leadership survey questionnaire used in this study was sourced from Li's (2019) self-designed "Leadership Survey Questionnaire for Primary and Secondary School Teachers." The questionnaire included three dimensions: teaching leadership, academic leadership, and value leadership, with 26 questions. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of each dimension of the questionnaire was between 0.850 and 0.903, and the overall reliability was 0.946, indicating that the questionnaire had high reliability. Confirmatory factor analysis showed that RMSEA was  $0.064 < 0.08$ , RMR was  $0.029 < 0.05$ , GFI, AGFI, NFI, RFI, IFI, TLI, and CFI were all  $> 0.9$ , PNFI was  $0.725 > 0.5$ , which indicated that the primary adaptation index of the estimated results was good. The external quality and convergence validity of the model were good. This study aimed at the questionnaire of primary school teachers' occupational happiness in Kunming, Yunnan Province, which comes from the questionnaire of primary school teachers' occupational happiness revised by Dang et al. (2021) and Wang (2007). The scale included seven dimensions: work emotion, salary and benefits, working environment, work effectiveness, interpersonal relationship, physical health, and career itself, with 37 questions. The results showed that Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was between 0.725 and 0.891, all higher than 0.7, indicating an overall Cronbach  $\alpha$  was 0.956, which was higher than 0.7, saying that the reliability of the questionnaire met the statistical standards of this study and had a strong level of reliability.

## **Results**

### ***Demographic Analysis of Questionnaire Participants***

This study selected primary school teachers from three schools in Kunming, Yunnan Province, as the survey subjects, and it collected and organized 229 valid questionnaires. The demographic background of the survey mainly included gender, teaching age, whether to serve as a class teacher or not, and professional title. In terms of gender, there were 116 male teachers, accounting for 50.7%, and 113 female teachers, accounting for 49.3% in the valid questionnaire. The gender ratio was relatively balanced. In terms of teaching age, there were 62 teachers with a teaching age of less than 3 years,

accounting for 27.1%, 107 teachers with a teaching age of 4-10 years, accounting for 46.7%, and 60 teachers with a teaching age of more than 11 years, accounting for 26.2%. There were more teachers aged 4-10 years and older. As for the identity of class teachers, there were 114 class teachers, accounting for 49.8%, and 115 non-class teachers, accounting for 50.2%. More teachers were responsible for the work of class teachers, which was in line with the actual situation of primary schools. Regarding professional titles, there were 78 teachers with primary professional titles, accounting for 34.1%, 105 teachers with secondary professional titles, 45.9%, 46 teachers with tertiary professional titles, accounting for 20.1%, and more teachers with secondary and primary professional titles.

***Descriptive Statistics on the Levels of Leadership and Occupational Happiness***

1) The primary school teachers' overall leadership was high. The mean teaching, academic, and value leadership values were 3.560, 3.628, and 3.413, respectively. Among them, visionary leadership had the highest mean value, followed by teaching leadership, while value leadership had the lowest. Therefore, the overall level of primary school teachers' leadership was high, among which the mean of academic leadership was the highest and the mean of value leadership was the lowest, as Table 1 shows.

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Leadership of Primary School Teachers

Dimension	N	M	SD	Interpretation
Teaching leadership	229	3.560	0.573	High
Academic leadership	229	3.628	0.627	High
Value Leadership	229	3.413	0.622	Moderate
Overall teacher leadership	229	3.534	0.518	High

2) The primary school teachers' occupational happiness was 3.483, which was moderate. The means of seven dimensions, namely, work emotion, salary and benefits, working environment, work effectiveness, interpersonal relationship, physical health, and the career itself, were 3.819, 3.037, 3.702, 3.595, 3.525, 3.140, and 3.568 in turn, among which the mean of work emotion was the highest, followed by working environment and work effectiveness, while salary and benefits was the lowest, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Occupational Happiness of Primary School Teachers

Dimension	N	M	SD	Interpretation
Work emotion	229	3.819	0.703	High
Salary and benefits	229	3.037	0.636	Moderate
Working environment	229	3.702	0.683	High
Work effectiveness	229	3.595	0.740	High
Interpersonal relationship	229	3.525	0.614	High
Physical health	229	3.140	0.628	Moderate
Career itself	229	3.568	0.601	High
Overall occupational happiness	229	3.483	0.530	Moderate



### *Differences Analysis on the Leadership and Occupational Happiness Compared with Demographic Backgrounds*

Through the statistical analysis of differences, to understand the differences in leadership and occupational happiness of primary school teachers in different demographic backgrounds in Kunming, Yunnan Province. Therefore, this study used an independent sample T-test and one-way ANOVA analysis to analyze primary school teachers' differences in gender, teaching age, class teacher, and professional title.

### *Correlation Analysis among Leadership and Occupational Happiness*

**Table 3:** Summary of Correlation Analysis of Leadership and Occupational Happiness

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Teaching leadership	1											
2. Academic leadership	.667***	1										
3. Value leadership	.557***	.544***	1									
4. Overall teacher leadership	.862***	.868***	.826***	1								
5. Work emotion	.333***	.308***	.183**	.321***	1							
6. Salary and benefits	.370***	.296***	.261***	.361***	.529***	1						
7. Working environment	.319***	.274***	.273***	.338***	.564***	.626***	1					
8. Work effectiveness	.371***	.343***	.268***	.383***	.554***	.567***	.570***	1				
9. Interpersonal relationship	.319***	.336***	.288***	.369***	.531***	.655***	.639***	.655***	1			
10. Physical health	.315***	.231***	.212**	.294***	.480***	.616***	.535***	.509***	.592***	1		
11. Career itself	.337***	.287***	.280***	.353***	.576***	.620***	.662***	.588***	.694***	.664***	1	
12. Overall occupational happiness	.420***	.370***	.312***	.430***	.758***	.814***	.817***	.797***	.840***	.772***	.845***	1

## **Discussion**

### *Current Leadership and Occupational Happiness of Primary School Teachers*

The phenomenon of having the highest average level of academic leadership and the lowest mean leadership among primary school teachers in Kunming. This result was similar to the research conclusion of Li (2020), which might be due to the failure of primary school teachers to integrate academic research results into teaching practice fully or the lack of effective methods and strategies to guide students to conduct scholarly inquiry. It can be seen that in modern society, diversity and conflict of values are common phenomena. Primary school teachers in Kunming might face the impact of various values, which limit value leadership development. The overall occupational happiness of primary school teachers in Kunming, Yunnan Province, was at a medium level, among which the mean of work emotion was the highest. The mean salary was the lowest for many reasons, including the

positive experience of work emotion, the relative dissatisfaction with wages, the lack of social support and recognition, the challenge of work pressure and career development, and the difference in personal values and expectations.

***Differences in Leadership and Occupational Happiness among Primary School Teachers in Different Demographic Backgrounds***

(1) The results of gender differences showed that the average leadership of female primary school teachers was significantly higher than that of male primary school teachers. It might be because female primary school teachers tend to pay more attention to student's needs and development and perform better in communication and coordination. In addition, female primary school teachers might be more willing to participate in various school and community activities to improve their leadership. With the increase in teaching age, primary school teachers have gradually accumulated rich teaching age and leadership experience, thus performing better in primary school teachers' leadership. The class teachers need to take on more management responsibilities and decision-making tasks, which help to improve their leadership ability. In addition, class teachers usually have more direct contact with students and parents, which also helps them better understand students' needs and make corresponding leadership decisions. Primary school teachers with primary professional titles usually have higher academic standards and teaching abilities and more profound attainments in the subject area, so they perform better in leadership.

(2) As a result of gender differences, the average occupational happiness of male primary school teachers was significantly lower than that of female primary school teachers, which might be related to male role orientation and social expectations in education. Females were not more likely to adapt to the pace and environment of educational work and were more likely to view it as a source of personal achievement. New primary school teachers were full of enthusiasm and freshness for their work. With time, some primary school teachers might feel that their career development was blocked or fall into a career bottleneck, resulting in a decline in happiness. In addition, long-term engagement in education work might lead to occupational burnout, thereby affecting the happiness of primary school teachers. Class teachers take on more management responsibilities and communication tasks with students' parents, contributing to an enhanced sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Simultaneously, excessive professional pressure might have had adverse effects. Additionally, class teachers typically enjoyed more work autonomy and decision-making power, which might have positively impacted their happiness. Professional titles were typically associated with primary school teachers' professional ability and social status. Primary school teachers with primary professional titles might have had higher status and more opportunities in their work, thereby obtaining increased happiness. With the promotion of professional titles, primary school teachers had richer professional abilities and experience, which helped enhance their self-confidence and satisfaction.

***Relationship between Leadership and Occupational Happiness of Primary School Teachers***

There was a significant positive correlation between primary school teachers' leadership and occupational happiness in Kunming, Yunnan Province, mainly because the development of primary school teachers' leadership could improve their ability and influence in education and teaching, student development, teamwork, etc., and then enhance their sense of professional accomplishment and satisfaction.

**Conclusions**

1) The overall level of primary school teachers' leadership in Kunming, Yunnan Province, was high, among which the academic leadership was the highest and the value leadership was the lowest.

The overall occupational happiness of primary school teachers in Kunming, Yunnan Province, was moderate, among which the work emotion was the highest and salary and benefit was the lowest.

2) There were significant differences in demographic background (gender, teaching age, whether to serve as a class teacher or not, and professional title) in primary school teachers' leadership and occupational happiness in Kunming, Yunnan Province: in teacher leadership, the mean of male teachers was significantly lower than that of female teachers, the mean of teachers with more than 11 years teaching age was significantly higher than that of teachers with less than 3 years teaching age and 4 to 10 years teaching age, the class teacher was significantly higher than the non-class teachers, and the teachers with the primary titles were significantly higher than that of teachers with secondary and tertiary titles. In occupational happiness, the male teachers were significantly lower than female teachers, the teachers with less than 3 years of teaching age were significantly higher than teachers with 4 to 10 years of teaching age, and more than 11 years of teaching age, the class teachers were significantly higher than non-class teachers. The primary teachers were significantly higher than that of secondary and tertiary teachers.

3) There was a significant positive correlation between leadership and occupational happiness of primary school teachers in Kunming, Yunnan Province.

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