

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED PATERNALISTIC LEADERSHIP AND WORK-FAMILY BALANCE AMONG PRIMARY TEACHERS IN LIXIN EDUCATION GROUP in ZAOZHUANG, SHANDONG PROVINCE, CHINA

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between perceived paternalistic leadership and their work-family balance among primary teachers in Lixin Education Group (LEG) in Zaozhuang city, Shandong Province, China, and to analyses the differences in teachers' perceptions of these two variables across different contextual variables. The study used quantitative research methods. A total of 242 primary teachers in LEG were used as the study population. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), independent samples t-test and Pearson correlation analysis. The results of the study found that (1) the overall perceived paternalistic leadership of primary teachers was at a moderate level, with virtue scoring the highest and benevolence the lowest. (2) Work-family balance as a whole was also at a moderate level, with relatively high scores on the feedback dimension. (3) In terms of paternalistic leadership, there were significant differences in the variables of teaching age, education, and gender; for example, teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience perceived leadership virtues to be significantly higher than other groups. (4) In terms of work-family balance, significant differences were found in terms of teaching age, qualifications, gender and subject type, with female teachers having a significantly higher level of overall balance than their male counterparts. (5) Most critically, there was a significant negative correlation between paternalistic leadership and work-family balance, suggesting that paternalistic leadership style has a disruptive effect on teachers' family role fulfilment while enhancing organizational effectiveness.

Keywords: Paternalistic Leadership, Perceived Work-Family Balance, Work-Family Balance

Introduction

Global education systems are being challenged by the increasing complexity and diversity of

teachers' professional roles, their increasing workloads, and widespread concerns about mental health and career stability. Work-Family Balance (WFB) issues have been widely recognized as an important factor affecting teachers' job performance, burnout and propensity to leave the profession (Lau et al., 2019). According to the Teachers and Teaching International Survey (TALIS 2019) published by the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), more than 66% of teachers surveyed reported that teaching stress and extra workload significantly interfered with their family life (Malik & Santoso, 2022). This is highlighted in East Asian and Southern European countries, where teachers' average work week exceeds 50 hours, while supportive systems lag behind (Dedahanov et al., 2019).

In China, this phenomenon is also becoming increasingly prominent. With the "double reduction" policy, digitalization of education and classroom assessment reforms, primary and secondary school teachers are responsible for a wide range of non-teaching tasks, including regular teaching duties, as well as a large number of non-teaching matters, such as student management, home-school communication, implementation of pedagogical reforms, and operation of information technology platforms. According to survey data from the Chinese Academy of Educational Sciences 2022, more than 72% of teachers at the basic education level feel that work pressure directly affects the quality of their family life (Zhang & Hao, 2022). Young teachers and female teachers, face double pressure between childcare and professional development (Wei & Ye, 2022). The tension between work and family is exacerbated by society's rising expectations and demands on teachers' roles, but the relative lack of organizational support and psychological adjustment resources.

Lixin Education Group, as a model school in Zaozhuang City, operates under high performance pressure with strong demands for educational quality and refined management. In this context, how teachers balance work and family significantly affects both their well-being and the school's teaching quality and staff stability. Leadership style plays a critical role, with perceived paternalistic leadership—characterized by authority, care, and moral guidance—shaping teacher behavior and the organizational climate (Liddicoat et al., 2021). At Lixin, management embraces a culturally rooted, collective-oriented paternalistic leadership, marked by close involvement in teachers' work and personal lives. While this approach strengthens team stability, it can also challenge teachers' autonomy and role boundaries (Zhang et al., 2021), making it a unique setting to explore the impact of paternalistic leadership on work-family balance.

The paternalistic leadership style at Lixin Education Group reflects traditional Chinese cultural values, positioning school leaders as parental figures and teachers as family members. Leaders actively intervene in both professional and personal aspects of teachers' lives, embodying Confucian principles of authority, care, and moral guidance. This culturally rooted management approach balances control with support but may blur boundaries between professional and personal domains. This study takes Lixin as a case to examine how the three dimensions of perceived paternalistic leadership —

authoritarianism, benevolence, and morality — affect teachers' work-family balance. It highlights the complexity of school management shaped by local culture and provides insights for optimizing teacher support systems. The research aligns with a broader shift in educational management from performance-driven models to a greater emphasis on humanistic care, teacher well-being, and sustainable career development.

By approaching the study from the perspective of work-family balance, the study responds to the urgent need for research on teachers' professional well-being in the current field of educational psychology. As a profession characterized by highly emotional labor, teachers' management of the tension between work and family has increasingly become a deep-rooted causal factor of burnout, teacher attrition, and changes in teaching quality. This study not only attempts to build a bridge of logical association between teachers perceived paternalistic leadership and work-family balance at the theoretical level, but also hopes to promote the development of educational management and leadership theories through empirical analyses in localized educational scenarios, which in turn will enrich and deepen the theoretical system of teachers' professional behaviors in the Chinese context.

The results of this study can be used to inform the development of more targeted teacher support policies. Teacher turnover and burnout have become a common problem in basic education management. By identifying the differences in work-family balance and its influencing factors among teachers from different backgrounds, this study can help to promote individualized management. This study responds to the challenge of teachers' "physical and mental stress" in frontline education practice, and by revealing the complex relationship between teachers' perceived paternalistic leadership and work-family balance, it provides a practical and feasible way to build a more humanistic educational organizational culture, improve teachers' career satisfaction and stability of the education system.

Research Objectives

- (1) To understand the current levels of perceived paternalistic leadership primary teachers in Lixin Education Group.
- (2) To understand the current levels of work-family balance among primary teachers in Lixin Education Group.
- (3) To analyze the significant differences of perceived paternalistic leadership among primary teachers in Lixin Education Group under different background variables.
- (4) To analyze the significant differences in the work-family balance of primary teachers in Lixin Education Group under different background variables.
- (5) To explore the relationship between perceived paternalistic leadership and work-family balance among primary teachers of Lixin Education Group.

Literatures Review

Related support theories

Paternalistic Leadership Theory (PLT), rooted in Chinese management practices, was first introduced by Redding (1990) to describe the “parental” leadership style common in East Asian cultures. Cheng et al. (2004) defined its three core dimensions: authoritarianism, benevolence, and morality shaped by Confucian values of hierarchy, emotional bonds, and moral integrity. Authoritarianism emphasizes control and obedience, benevolence reflects care for subordinates’ well-being, and morality highlights the leader’s integrity and role-modeling. These dimensions coexist in practice and collectively influence employee outcomes.

Research shows that paternalistic leadership can enhance trust and loyalty, especially in cultures valuing hierarchy and harmony. In education, benevolent and moral leadership promote teacher satisfaction and emotional stability, while authoritarianism may hinder innovation and increase stress (Li et al., 2018). Although PLT is increasingly studied across cultures, its foundation remains in traditional Eastern values. Its relational and moral nature makes it particularly effective in emotionally intensive professions like teaching and healthcare.

Boundary Theory explores how individuals manage the conflict and integration between multiple social roles, particularly work and family. When responsibilities from these roles clash, it leads to role stress and work-family conflict (WFC) (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2019). Frone et al. (1992) emphasized that individuals create boundaries to transition between roles, with some maintaining clear separations and others allowing overlap. The permeability and flexibility of these boundaries vary by person (Allen et al., 2014; Kossek et al., 2006).

The theory highlights the importance of subjective boundary perceptions and management strategies. In teaching, the emotional and extended nature of the work often blurs role boundaries. However, teachers who adopt effective strategies, such as time management, clear role definition, and utilizing organizational support, experience less conflict and greater job and family satisfaction (Piszczek, 2017). Boundary Theory also underscores the role of institutions in supporting work-family balance through flexible policies and psychological support (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2019).

Research on Teachers’ Perceived Paternalistic Leadership

Teachers perceived paternalistic leadership is a culturally embedded leadership style that blends authority, benevolence, and morality, rooted in Confucian family ethics. This leadership model reflects values of collectivism, hierarchy, and relationship orientation, shaping teachers’ emotional attachment, job satisfaction, and organizational identity (Mehmet Ş. et al., 2024). Rather than being static, this perception is shaped by individual experiences and cultural context, reflecting a dynamic interaction between leaders’ behaviors and teachers’ interpretations within the school environment (Mert & Özgenel, 2020).

Teachers perceived paternalistic leadership, widely studied in Confucian-influenced regions

like China, Taiwan, and South Korea, is a culturally rooted leadership style that integrates authority, benevolence, and morality (Shi et al., 2020; Zheng et al., 2020). Teachers' perceptions are shaped by cultural norms, organizational climate, and personal experiences, influencing their trust, professional behavior, and emotional well-being (Huang & Yin, 2024). Existing studies, however, often focus on outcomes and overlook individual differences and diverse school types (Huang & Yin, 2023). Overall, perceived paternalistic leadership is a dynamic, culturally embedded construct that shapes teacher-school relationships and contributes to organizational stability and effectiveness (Kavgacı, 2023).

The measurement of teachers perceived paternalistic leadership originates from the localization of paternalistic leadership theory, emphasizing leaders' authority, care, and moral example within Eastern cultural contexts. Researchers have developed multidimensional scales—particularly the three-factor model of benevolent, moral, and authoritarian leadership—to capture teachers' subjective perceptions (Chen et al., 2012; Kavgacı, 2023). Initially adapted from corporate settings, these scales have been refined for educational use, demonstrating strong reliability and cultural fit. Studies show that teachers' perceptions reflect both formal administrative actions and daily emotional interactions (Hashmi et al., 2021). Chen et al.'s (2012) validated scale showed high internal consistency across dimensions, with Cronbach's alphas above 0.80, and strong external validity through correlations with team cohesion and performance.

Research on Teachers' Work-Family Balance

Work-family balance refers to the coordinated state in which individuals effectively manage their work responsibilities and family roles, achieving both psychological satisfaction and role alignment. Early studies focused on conflict between work and family, while later research introduced positive dimensions such as facilitation and enrichment. Frone (2003) proposed a four-dimensional model of work-family balance that includes both conflict and facilitation in dual directions, defining balance as the coexistence of low conflict and high mutual support. In the context of Chinese collective culture, scholars like Lin et al. (2016) emphasized a holistic and ecological understanding of balance. For teachers, whose roles involve high professionalism and emotional labor, work-family balance is not simply the absence of conflict but the ability to draw positive resources from one domain to support the other (Lizana & Vega-Fernandez, 2021).

Research on teachers' work-family balance has evolved from focusing on role conflict to exploring how resource allocation, organizational support, and individual coping strategies influence balance. Frone (2003) highlighted the bidirectional nature of this conflict, where work interferes with family life and vice versa. Empirical evidence shows that work-related stress can negatively affect teachers' emotional engagement at home, while domestic pressures can impair their focus and performance at school (Rahayu et al., 2021). Teachers with access to flexible schedules, collegial environments, and supportive leadership are better equipped to manage work-family tensions (Anggriansyah et al., 2022).

Early tools like the Work-Family Conflict Scale measured negative impacts of work and family interference but overlooked positive experiences and coping strategies. Later, scales based on resource theory expanded this by assessing teachers' ability to manage multiple roles simultaneously, emphasizing subjective experiences of balance (Lizana & Vega-Fernandez, 2021). Research with teacher populations links work stress and emotional exhaustion to family role conflict, while studies on facilitation highlight the importance of organizational support and role identity (Lin et al., 2016).

Research on Chinese primary school teachers' work-family balance began relatively late, initially adapting foreign theories and scales. With growing professional pressures and family demands, studies have focused on role conflicts, especially among female and middle-aged teachers facing traditional family expectations (Wang et al., 2019). Workload, emotional exhaustion, and family support significantly affect teachers' ability to balance roles, with excessive stress undermining family commitment (Zeng et al., 2021). Moderate work-family conflict is linked to job satisfaction, burnout, and mental health, while family and organizational support help alleviate tensions (Zhao et al., 2022).

Research on Relationship between Teachers' Perceived Paternalistic leadership and Work-Family Balance

Research on the relationship between teachers perceived paternalistic leadership and work-family balance highlights how leadership behaviors influence teachers' ability to manage their dual roles through emotional support, flexible arrangements, and cultural guidance. Benevolent and virtuous leadership reduce work stress, enhance teachers' sense of control, and foster trust and loyalty, helping to ease role conflict and promote work-family harmony (Zhao et al., 2022; Huang & Yin, 2024). In contrast, authoritarian leadership restricts teachers' autonomy, increasing stress and hindering family role fulfillment (Zeng et al., 2021). Especially in education, where work often extends beyond hours and involves emotional commitment, parental leaders who acknowledge family roles provide crucial psychological support that strengthens balance (Huang & Yin, 2023). Empirical studies confirm that higher perceptions of benevolence and virtue correlate with better work-family balance, particularly in collectivist cultures, while authoritarianism exacerbates stress and conflict (Shi et al., 2020; Zhang, 2022).

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative method to explore in-service primary school teachers' perceptions of paternalistic leadership and work-family balance within Lixin Education Group in Zaozhuang, Shandong, targeting all 618 teachers across its 5 member schools. Based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) criteria, a sample size of 242 teachers was deemed appropriate, with data collection planned via an online questionnaire (QR code) distributed through school WeChat groups in July-August 2025. Paternalistic leadership was assessed using Chen et al.'s (2012) 18-item scale across three dimensions (benevolent, authoritative, and virtuous leadership), while work-family balance was

measured using Lin et al.'s (2016) 17-item scale across five dimensions (regulation, resistance, transformation, feedback, and compensation), both employing a 5-point Likert scale.

Table 1: Stratified Sampling Distribution

Serial Number	Name of the Faculty	Sample	Sampling
1	Zaozhuang Lixin Primary School	234	92
2	Zaozhuang Lixin Primary School West Campus	96	38
3	Zaozhuang Lixin Primary School East Campus	127	50
4	Zaozhuang Lixin Primary School Gaoxin District	101	39
5	Zaozhuang Donghai Road Primary School	60	23
Total	Lixin Education Group Primary Schools Member Schools	618	242

Reliability and Validity Analysis

Adopting Chen et al.'s (2012) findings, the scale is divided into three dimensions, including benevolent leadership, authoritative leadership, and virtuous leadership, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.85, 0.84, and 0.80, respectively. The internal consistency coefficients of the dimensions range from 0.6 to 0.8, which suggests that the perceived paternalistic leadership of teachers is more reliable. Power Scale has high reliability. The Teachers' Work-Family Balance Scale of Lin et al. (2016) was used, which is divided into five dimensions, namely, regulation, resistance, transformation, feedback, and compensation, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.77, 0.78, 0.88, 0.89, and 0.92, respectively. the reliabilities were all above 0.7, and all of them were of good consistency.

The KMO value of the Teachers' Perceived Paternalistic Leadership Scale using Chen et al. (2012) was 0.800, $p < 0.001$, and the Bartlett's test reached the level of significance, indicating that the questionnaire could be factor analyzed. The KMO value of the Teachers' Work-Family Balance Scale using Lin et al. (2016) was 0.833, $p < 0.001$, and the Bartlett's test reached the level of significance indicating that the questionnaire had high validity.

Results

Demographic Analysis of Questionnaire Participants

During the research of this paper, a total of 242 valid questionnaires were collected through online questionnaires. The first part of the questionnaire was used to find out the demographic background information of primary school teachers in Lixin Education Group, which corresponds to the first question in the study. The current status of the demographic background variables of primary school teachers in Lixin Educational Group, the study showed a profile of teaching age, educational

qualifications, family status, gender, age and subjects taught. his multidisciplinary background helps to enhance the broad applicability of the study and the generalization value of the findings. The representative and varied distribution of the sample across multiple variables provides a solid data base for subsequent analyzes of the impact of paternalistic leadership on teachers' work-family balance.

Table 2: Basic information about the subjects (N=242)

Background	Subgroup	Frequency	Percentage
Years of teaching	Less than 5 years	86	35.5
	6-10 years	78	32.2
	10 years and above	78	32.2
Academic qualifications	Bachelor's degree	58	24.0
	Master's Degree	60	24.8
	PhD	46	19.0
	Other	78	32.2
Family status	agree	38	15.7
	Good	115	47.5
	Fair	64	26.4
	Poor	25	10.3
Sex	Male	129	53.3
	Female	113	46.7
Age	Less than 30 years old	22	9.1
	30-40 years	97	40.1
	41-50 years	99	40.9
	Above 50 years	24	9.9
Academic disciplines	Arts	58	24.0
	Science	59	24.4
	Engineering	72	29.8
	Arts/Sports	53	21.9
Total		242	100

Descriptive Analysis on the Levels of Perceived Paternalistic Leadership of Primary Teachers In LEG

This section analyzes the first research objective: the current status of perceived paternalistic leadership among primary school teachers at Lixin Education Group. Based on 242 valid questionnaires, the overall perception of paternalistic leadership is at a moderate level, with an average score of 3.08 (SD = 0.33). Teachers generally recognize paternalistic traits in leaders but do not strongly endorse

them. The “moral character” dimension scored highest ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.85$), indicating approval of leaders’ fairness and integrity. “Authority” ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 1.10$) and “benevolence” ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.20$) scored slightly lower, suggesting some concerns about excessive control or insufficient emotional support. Overall, teachers’ evaluations are neutral, reflecting both strengths and limitations in current leadership practices, which sets a foundation for further study on its impact on work-family balance.

Table 3: Status of Paternalistic leadership as Perceived by Primary School Teachers in Lixin Education Group

Dimension	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Evaluation
Kindness	242	2.85	1.20	Moderate
Virtue	242	3.40	0.85	Medium
Authority	242	2.99	1.10	Medium
Paternalistic leadership	242	3.08	0.33	Medium

The study found that primary school teachers in Lixin Education Group perceived paternalistic leadership at a moderate level overall, with an average score of 3.08. Significant differences emerged across background variables. For instance, teachers with over 10 years of experience reported higher perceptions of paternalistic leadership (Mean = 3.43) compared to those with less than 5 years (Mean = 2.97). Gender differences were notable in dimensions such as benevolence and authority, with female teachers scoring higher in benevolence (Mean = 4.11) and male teachers higher in authority (Mean = 3.97). However, no significant differences were found based on age, family status, or academic discipline, indicating a generally consistent perception across these groups.

Descriptive Analysis on the Levels Work-Family Balance of Primary Teachers in LEG

This section addresses the second research objective: the current status of work-family balance among primary school teachers at Lixin Education Group. Based on 242 valid questionnaires, the overall work-family balance score is 2.99 ($SD = 0.57$), indicating a moderate level. The feedback dimension scored highest at 3.49 ($SD = 0.79$), reflecting teachers’ perception of positive reciprocal effects between work and family. Regulating ($M=2.80$), resisting ($M=2.91$), transforming ($M=2.79$), and compensating ($M=2.94$) fall at a moderate level but with high variability (SDs 1.14–1.39), showing significant individual differences. Overall, teachers exhibit a generally moderate level of work-family balance.

Table 4: Work-Family Balance of Primary School Teachers in Lixin Education Group

Dimension	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Evaluation
Adjustment	242	2.80	1.14	Medium

Resistance	242	2.91	1.36	Medium
Conversion	242	2.79	1.39	Medium
Feedback	242	3.49	0.79	High
Compensation	242	2.94	1.24	Medium
Work-family balance	242	2.99	0.57	Medium

The analysis revealed significant differences in the work-family balance of primary school teachers in Lixin Education Group across several background variables. Gender played a notable role, with female teachers reporting higher levels of work-family balance (Mean = 3.07) compared to male teachers (Mean = 2.86), suggesting a stronger capacity or effort among women to manage dual roles. Teaching experience also showed a significant influence; teachers with over 10 years of experience reported better work-family balance (Mean = 3.14) than those with less than 5 years (Mean = 2.85), possibly reflecting enhanced time management skills or role adaptation over time. However, no statistically significant differences were found in relation to academic discipline or marital/family status, indicating that these factors may have less direct impact on perceived work-family balance in this context.

Correlation analysis between two variables

The study found a statistically significant negative correlation between perceived paternalistic leadership and work-family balance among primary school teachers in Lixin Education Group, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.208 ($p < 0.01$). This indicates that as teachers' perception of paternalistic leadership increases, their reported work-family balance tends to decrease. The result suggests that while paternalistic leadership may offer certain relational or organizational benefits, it could also be associated with greater expectations or role demands that potentially interfere with teachers' ability to maintain a healthy balance between work responsibilities and family life.

Discussion

Current Perceived Parental Leadership and Work-Family Balance Among Primary Teachers in LEG

Perceived Parental Leadership: The overall mean value of LEG primary school teachers' perceptions of parental leadership is 3.08, at a moderate level. The Virtue dimension scored the highest (mean = 3.40), indicating recognition of leaders' moral qualities. The Benevolence dimension scored 2.85, suggesting a need for stronger emotional care and support from leaders. The Authority dimension scored 2.99, indicating moderate perceived authority with a lack of strong control.

Work-Family Balance: Teachers' overall perception of work-family balance is at a moderate level (mean = 2.99). The Feedback dimension scored the highest (mean = 3.49), showing high levels of information feedback and emotional exchange. Other dimensions such as Regulation, Resistance,

Transformation, and Compensation were at moderate levels, indicating room for improvement in managing work-family conflicts and stress.

Differences in Perceived Parental Leadership Among Primary Teachers in LEG with Different Demographic Backgrounds

When examining the differences in v1 (Perceived Parental Leadership) among primary teachers in Lixin Education Group (LEG) with varying demographic backgrounds, several notable patterns emerge. In terms of teaching age, teachers boasting over a decade of experience exhibit significantly higher scores in the Virtue dimension and overall parental leadership perception compared to their less-experienced counterparts. Interestingly, educational qualification does not seem to play a significant role, as there are no marked differences in perceptions of paternalistic leadership across teachers with diverse educational backgrounds. Similarly, family economic status has no discernible impact on these perceptions. Gender, however, introduces some distinctions: female teachers score notably higher in the Benevolence dimension, whereas male teachers tend to score higher in the Authority dimension. Age, on the other hand, does not lead to significant differences in perceptions across different age groups, nor does discipline, as teachers from various disciplines demonstrate no significant variations in their perceptions.

Differences in Work-Family Balance Among Primary Teachers in LEG with Different Demographic Backgrounds

Turning to the differences in V2 (Work-Family Balance) among primary teachers in LEG with different demographic backgrounds, a different set of trends can be observed. Regarding teaching age, teachers with less than five years of experience report significantly higher overall work-family balance scores, as well as higher scores in the Regulation and Compensation dimensions, compared to those with more teaching experience. Educational qualification appears to have a positive influence, with higher qualifications correlated with better scores in the Transformation dimension and overall work-family balance. Once again, family economic status does not significantly affect work-family balance. Gender plays a role here too, with female teachers scoring significantly higher in overall work-family balance and the Feedback dimension. Although teachers over 50 years of age score higher in overall work-family balance, these differences do not reach statistical significance. Lastly, discipline does introduce some significant differences, particularly in the Regulation, Transformation, and Compensation dimensions. Arts and physical education teachers generally score higher in emotional transformation and role accommodation, while engineering teachers tend to score higher in compensation, highlighting the diverse challenges and coping mechanisms across different disciplines.

Relationship Between Perceived Parental Leadership And Work-Family Balance Among Primary Teachers In LEG

There is a significant negative relationship ($r = -0.208$, $p < 0.01$) between perceived parental leadership and work-family balance. Higher levels of perceived parental leadership are associated with

lower perceptions of work-family balance. This negative correlation suggests that the strong control and power elements of paternalistic leadership may impose extra responsibilities on teachers, compressing their family time and personal space, and leading to role conflict and life imbalance.

Conclusion

Research Findings

The study yielded several key insights. Firstly, regarding paternalistic leadership perception, teachers reported a moderate overall level, with benevolence standing out as the most prominent dimension, followed by moral leadership and authoritarianism. Additionally, there were significant differences in how teachers perceived paternalistic leadership based on factors such as teaching experience, academic qualifications, gender, and age. Secondly, in terms of work-family balance, teachers generally faced relatively low levels, indicating difficulties in managing the demands of both their professional and personal lives. Moreover, work-family balance levels varied significantly depending on marital status, age group, and the subject taught. Most notably, a significant negative correlation was identified between perceived paternalistic leadership and work-family balance, suggesting that while paternalistic leadership may offer support in some areas, it could also contribute to increased work-related expectations and pressures that interfere with family life.

Research Limitations

Despite its valuable contributions, the study is not without limitations. One major limitation lies in the sample, which was restricted to primary school teachers within Lixin Education Group in Zaozhuang, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to other regions or educational settings. The research design also poses a constraint, as the cross-sectional survey approach only captures a single moment in time, preventing causal inference or analysis of changes over time. Furthermore, the study focused solely on paternalistic leadership and work-family balance, neglecting other potentially influential factors such as school workload, administrative policies, or family support systems. Lastly, the exclusive use of quantitative methods may have overlooked the nuanced emotional and contextual experiences of teachers, highlighting the need for mixed-methods approaches in future research.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, several recommendations are proposed. School administrators should strive to cultivate a supportive leadership style characterized by care, integrity, and appropriate authority. This can enhance teachers' sense of belonging and work satisfaction, ultimately contributing to a more positive work environment. Additionally, policies should be designed to promote work-family balance, such as implementing flexible scheduling, reducing excessive workload, and providing psychological support services. These measures can help alleviate the pressures teachers face in managing their professional and personal lives. Furthermore, teacher development programs should

incorporate training on leadership communication and family support awareness, equipping educators with the skills and knowledge to effectively manage their dual roles. By implementing these recommendations, educational institutions can foster a healthier organizational climate and support the sustainable development of teachers' careers.

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