

An Analysis of Strategies for Improving Young University Teachers' Work Well-being: Based on the Mediating Effect of Psychological Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

Young teachers in universities are the backbone to promote the development of China's education. It is of great significance to explore the formation mechanism of their work well-being. This paper tries to build the model of its internal formation mechanism from the psychological level, and explores the internal forces and external factors that affect the work well-being of young university teachers. In the process of social support and school management activities affecting the work well-being of young university teachers, personality trait plays a moderating effect, and psychological empowerment plays a mediating effect. Then, drawing on the excellent cultivating practices of young teachers in American colleges and universities, this paper establishes a three-level linkage mechanism of work well-being promotion strategy from the perspective of psychological empowerment, which needs joint participation of young teachers themselves, universities and society.

Keywords : *young teachers in universities; mediating effect; psychological empowerment; work well-being*

1. INTRODUCTION

Young teachers in colleges and universities are the main force in the development of national education and talent training. They are the key for cultivating talents, fostering morality, and inheriting knowledge and culture. The core gap between Chinese universities and world-class universities lies in the quality and ability of the teaching staff. The future professional development and working motivation of young teachers in universities deserve the attention of the state and society. "Opinions of the CPC Central Committee and The State Council on comprehensively deepening the reform of teacher contingent construction in the New Era" in January 2018 proposed that "we must continuously improve the status and treatment, and truly make teacher an enviable profession". The work well-being of young teachers in universities reflects their work motivation, so there is no doubt that the level of work well-being of young teachers in universities should be one of the important indicators to measure the effectiveness of the reform of the national faculty. The survey shows that the work well-being of young university teachers in China is not really high, and the research on the influencing factors is not

comprehensive [1]. Therefore, there is important practical significance to explore the influencing factors, formation mechanism and promotion strategies of young university teachers' work well-being.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS

2.1. The Concept and Connotation of Young University Teachers' Work Well-being

"Work well-being" has been separated from the decontextualized concept of "well-being" as a separate research field, and it is still in its infancy. Warr defines work well-being as "employees' evaluation of work experience and overall quality" [2]. Fisher defines it as a multi-dimensional umbrella construct, which involves the overall experience of short-term mood and emotions at work, and a relatively stable attitude [3]. Qiong Zou believes that work well-being is a psychological feeling and pleasant experience for individuals to achieve their goals and full potential. It is a dynamic process that requires sustained efforts and investment by organizations and individuals [4]. The research of work well-being has gone through three stages: subjective

well-being (SWB), psychological well-being (PWB), and integrated work well-being. Paschoal believes that the connotation of integrated work well-being includes subjective and psychological aspects, which not only integrates the positive emotional experience component of subjective well-being, but also covers the essence of the concept of psychological well-being—self-actualization. The number of research documents about integrated work well-being accounts for more than half of work well-being related researches, thus we believe that integrated work well-being should become a future research trend. This study supports that work well-being should be a combination of two types of well-being in a work situation. Therefore, young university teachers' work well-being is the emotional experience and the satisfaction degree of self-actualization need.

2.2. The Dimensions of Work Well-being of Young Teachers in Universities

Combining the definition of work well-being, Warr divides the dimensions into: emotional well-being, work ambition, work autonomy, and work competence. Liang Huang explored its measurement dimensions in the localization research of work well-being [5]. In the article "Study on the Dimensional Structure of Chinese Employees' Work Well-being", he believes that work well-being refers to the overall quality of employees' experience and effectiveness at work. He developed a scale to measure work well-being from four dimensions: emotional well-being, professional well-being, cognitive well-being, and social well-being. This article believes that research results of Liang Huang fit the connotation of young university teachers' work well-being to a large extent. Therefore, we can define and analyze young university teachers' work well-being from four dimensions: emotional well-being, professional well-being, cognitive well-being, and social well-being. Emotional well-being refers to the positive and negative well-being experiences obtained, such as happiness, optimism, satisfaction, misery, etc. Cognitive well-being is the number of times of flow experience in work and the perception of their ability and confidence in handling problems. The professional well-being is mainly manifested in the young teachers' sense of their work competence, work ambition, and work recognition. Social well-being means the young teachers' sense of belonging, the degree of importance the organization attaches to them, and the degree of harmony in the relationship with other members at work.

2.3. The Concept and Connotation of Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment is a synthesis of attitudes and cognition about intrinsic motivation formed by individuals through the evaluation of work situations. It measures the relationship between work and

individuals from the perspective of matching. Thomas, Velt-house and Spreitzer did some researches about psychological empowerment and the results are highly acceptable. They all support that psychological empowerment includes four dimensions: meaning, self-efficacy or competence, self-determination, and impact. The meaning of work is the individual's judgment about the value of work. Self-efficacy is the individual's sense of competence to complete the work or tasks. Self-determination reflects the individual's sense of control over the work process. The impact of work is the individual's perception of the degree of individual influence on organizational management, team development, important tasks and other aspects. In addition, the research results of Khany (2016) and Li Xiufeng (2020) show that there is a correlation between psychological empowerment and work well-being, which lays the foundation for this article to explore the inner formation mechanism of work well-being [6] [7].

3. INFLUENCING FACTORS AND FORMATION MECHANISM

This paper analyzes the factors that affect the well-being of young teachers in colleges and universities through the collection and sorting of literature data, and on-site interviews. Next, these factors will be elaborated from the three levels of individual, school, and society.

3.1. Influencing Factors of Young University Teachers' Work Well-being

3.1.1 Individual factors

Individual personality traits are closely related to the work well-being of young university teachers. Zhibin Zeng (2015) took universities in southern Jiangxi as an example and confirmed that positive psychological qualities (such as wisdom, courage, humanity, fairness, temperance, and transcendence) are positively related to the work well-being of young university teachers [8]. Research by Jie Chen et al. found that mental states such as interpersonal sensitivity and depression have a negative impact on work well-being [9]. At the same time, some scholars have found in their research that mature work coping styles such as proactive problem solving and being good at asking for help are positively correlated with work well-being. In the research interviews, we also found that physical health and personality types are also closely related to young university teachers. For example, active personality is positively related to work well-being of young university teachers.

3.1.2 Work and school factors

Higher work requirements are transformed into work stress, which negatively affects work happiness.

In terms of teaching, young university teachers face the teaching skill pressure of familiarizing themselves with the content of the course and accumulating teaching methods, the knowledge and ability pressure due to increasing quality of students, the supervision pressure caused by teaching supervision and teaching competitions, and the task pressure that from increasing amount of after-school tutoring and other teaching related tasks. In one word, their teaching difficulty and teaching intensity continue to increase. In terms of scientific research, the deviation in understanding higher education connotative construction and development in universities has led to the continuous increase of young university teachers' scientific research requirements. Young teachers have to spend more energy on the publication of research papers and application for topics. However, due to rigid requirements such as academic qualifications and professional titles, it is difficult for young teachers to publish high-quality papers and apply for topics above the provincial level successfully. Under the dual pressure of teaching and scientific research, young university teachers may even doubt their own abilities, at the same time, their sense of self-efficacy continues to decrease, and then work well-being of them is not well.

The evaluation and incentive mechanism affect the work well-being of young university teachers at the psychological level. On one hand, the wages of young teachers in the early stages of professional development are generally low, which is not proportional to their workload, in other words, they have to face strong survival pressure, what's worse, it will make young teachers have a low sense of respect for their profession and work. On the other hand, the professional title evaluation standard is high, so the fairness of the evaluation process is of great concern to young university teachers. However, the seniority ranking and complex interpersonal relationships make the young teachers of universities extremely disappointed, which greatly affects the sense of the work meaning of the young teachers in universities. For example, one young teacher in a "211 university" chose to resign when he met the conditions but did not pass the evaluation successfully. At the same time, it was found that organizational justice and work well-being are positively correlated in empirical research. Third, the teacher development platform and teacher training mechanism are not perfect, and the knowledge panic and skill panic of young teachers cannot be resolved. Career development is the key to young university teachers' self-realization that affecting their work well-being. All in all, the school management context variables are closely related to the sense of work meaning and self-determination of young university teachers.

The school's organizational culture and management atmosphere affect the work well-being of young university teachers from the perspective of "social people". The pursuit of free communication, teamwork,

and harmonious interpersonal relationships reflects the "social person" attributes of young university teachers to a large extent, and is an important source of the social well-being dimension of work well-being. It was found in the survey that those with a higher level of work well-being are appreciated by leaders and colleagues. Work identity and sense of belonging in the university have an impact on work well-being through individual work autonomy and work impact. In addition, Lejiao Dai (2020) found in her research that if schools fully respect teachers' opinions or increase their sense of participation, teachers' psychological perceptions of work meaning, work autonomy, self-efficacy, and work impact will be higher, and work well-being will also be higher [10].

3.1.3. Social factors

Through interviews, we found that some young teachers in universities believe that they do not receive too much respect, nor are they proud of being a teacher. Therefore, the atmosphere of respect for teaching in the whole society and the state's supportive policies for the teaching profession have affected young teachers' recognition of the meaning and sense of work value. At the same time, we have also noticed that the role expectations of teachers jointly constructed by society and the state conflict with the perceptions of young teachers themselves. Meanwhile, the "administrative" and "marketization" of colleges and universities make young teachers fall to the bottom of society. Therefore, their pressure is greater and the work well-being is lower.

3.2. The Formation Mechanism of Young University Teachers' Work Well-being

Through the above analysis and combining, this article believes that individual abilities and personality traits affect the entire formation process of work well-being. School and social factors ultimately play a role through the transformation of individuals. During the transformation process, part of them directly affects work well-being in the form of work stress, and the other part has an impact on work well-being through the mediating effect of psychological empowerment. Therefore, the inner formation mechanism of young university teachers' work well-being can be summarized as the following three routes.

Route 1: Individual traits affect young university teachers' work well-being through their perception of school management activities and social support.

Positive psychological qualities and active problem-solving methods are positively related to young university teachers' work well-being; traits such as interpersonal sensitivity are negatively related to young university teachers' work well-being

Route 2: School management activities and social

factors are transformed into work stress, and then affect work well-being.

The various management activities of the school put forward requirements for young teachers, this requirement can be transformed into two kinds of stressor, one is challenge stressor, the other is hindrance stressor [11], challenge stressor is beneficial to the growth of young university teachers, such as requirements or responsibilities which not only based on young university teachers' career development but also they can handle. Hindrance stressor are often related to unfair organizational mechanisms, role conflicts, unfree work atmosphere, and job insecurity, young university teachers seemed helpless when they faced with such stressor, Research shows that challenge stressor positively affects work well-being and hindrance stressor negatively affects work well-being [12].

Route 3: School management activities and social factors affect the psychological empowerment level of young university teachers, and then affect their work well-being.

The individual's perception of the school's work requirements, evaluation mechanism, academic atmosphere, and teacher supportive policies and other related situations affects the four dimensions of psychological empowerment: sense of work meaning, self-efficacy, work autonomy, work influence, and further influence young teachers' own work well-being. Young teachers in universities have the characteristics of both "youth" and "intellectuals", they tend to pursue the value and meaning conferred by work, show the need for social respect and self-realization, sound and reasonable teacher development mechanism, relaxed academic atmosphere, and high professional status can meet their needs, which in turn enable them to have a higher sense of work well-being.

Based on this, this paper constructs a model of the formation mechanism of young university teachers' work well-being. As shown in figure 1.

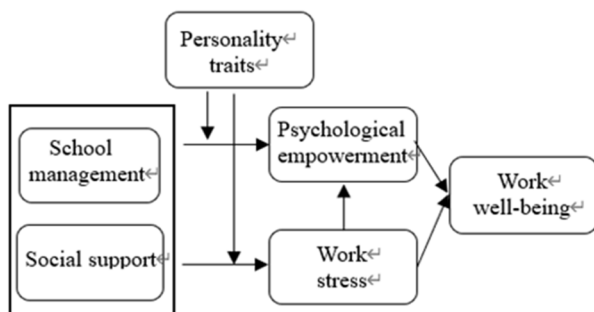


Figure 1 Model of the formation mechanism of young university teachers' work well-being

4. PROMOTION STRATEGIES AND SUGGESTIONS

On the basis of the above analysis, combined with the mature experience of the career development of young teachers in American colleges and universities, this paper put forward the following strategies and suggestions to promote university teachers' well-being.

4.1. University and Individuals Work Together to Cultivate Positive Psychological Qualities of Young Teachers

On the one hand, from the individual level, young university teachers should focus on cultivating their own positive psychological qualities through multiple channels. Positive psychological qualities include efficient problem-solving skills, effective pressure coping styles and communication skills, etc. Therefore, young teachers should cultivate their own initiative to solve problems, analyze problems from multiple perspectives and find solutions to the problems by multi-channel timely. And then, they also should actively improve all aspects of ability and quality, update professional knowledge and educational concepts, and become a competitive university teacher. What's more, it is necessary for young university teachers to make good use of overall planning, decompose goals, and rationally arrange various tasks in the work, we hope that they can improve time efficiency and self-efficacy. At the same time, it would be helpful for them to cultivate hobbies and establish a communication circle.

On the other hand, universities should take various measures to help young teachers face occupational stress, so that they would have a healthy psychological state. For example, universities can set up a mental health consultation center, organize trainings such as psychological disengagement and recovery experience, in order to establish a reasonable psychological recovery mechanism for young teachers in colleges and universities [13], and effectively relieve their work pressure. American colleges and universities practice a system with similar functions, which is called sabbatical, after a period of work, college teachers can enjoy a six-months or one-year paid vacation, during this time, university teachers can concentrate on academic visits, exchanges, and monographs. the academic level of teachers has been improved, and the work well-being of teachers has been greatly improved. Therefore, Chinese universities can also try this system, and young university teachers who meet the corresponding conditions can enjoy academic leave.

4.2. Improve the Teacher Professional Development Mechanism to Meet the Self-realization Needs of Young Teachers

The American college and university teacher career development system is lauded for the following characteristics, attaching importance to the academic status of teaching, setting up teacher development centers in colleges and universities, diversified forms of teaching development, and evaluation and incentive methods conducive to encouraging the development of young teachers. Specifically, American colleges and universities attach importance to the academic status of teaching and balance the status of teaching and scientific research. Based on this, most colleges and universities have set up special teacher development centers, and provide high-quality resources, communication platforms and further education activities for teachers considering the difference of new teachers, teaching assistants, and ordinary teachers. For example, for newly recruited teachers, the school selects tutors for them, and provides "one-to-one" assistance to improve their teaching abilities and qualities [14], also helps them adapt to school life as soon as possible. At the same time, teachers' learning results can be linked to the evaluation of professional titles, excellent people can even get a "tenured teaching position." In terms of evaluation and incentive methods, teachers' performance will be evaluated in accordance with standards at public conferences, and relevant persons in charge will communicate with each teacher and answer questions, follow-up related objections can also be consulted in writing.

Through the above analysis, we realize that universities of our country should pay more attention to a sound teacher development mechanism when they try to improve work well-being of young teachers at work, and then take measures to reduce hindrance stressor and improve the level of psychological empowerment. Learn from the relevant experience of the United States, universities should work hard. Firstly, universities should pay more attention to the academic status of teaching, strengthen the training of teaching ability, and reduce the pressure of scientific research. Secondly, they can implement more humane development strategies for young teachers, such as providing personalized career development plans, implementing multi-level and multi-channel training and further education plans; implementing a tutorial system, provide teacher development manuals and support services in various aspects to young teachers; carrying out various teacher interaction activities, just like famous teacher workshops, lunch meeting, teaching salons, etc., in order to promote exchanges between teachers, and then build an academic community [15], which encourages teachers to cooperate and learn from each other, aiming promote common progress and common development of young teachers in

universities. Thirdly, under the guidance of national policies, we hope that universities can develop an evaluation mechanism that is conducive to stimulating the enthusiasm of young teachers in their careers, implement multiple evaluation methods, introduce consulting services, establish correct evaluation guidance, and ensure fairness and justice in evaluation.

4.3. Strengthen the Top-level Design of the Teacher System and Enhance the Professional Honor of Young Teachers

The development of education in the United States has entered the era of "coordinators", universities can cope with the challenges inside and outside the school when achieve the development of teachers [16]. On the road to the internationalization of China's education, the Chinese government should continue to learn and explore, strengthen the top-level planning for teachers development, improve the professional competitiveness of teachers, and let young teachers have direction and strength in their work, We should also actively create an atmosphere of respect for teachers in the whole society, improve teachers' living conditions, provide various teacher-friendly welfare measures, and improve their social and economic status, so that young teachers can have a safe life and a warm heart.

5. CONCLUSION

Firstly, the work well-being of young teachers in universities is a multidimensional concept, which contains emotional well-being, professional well-being, cognitive well-being and social well-being. Secondly, in the process of social support and school management activities affecting the work well-being of young university teachers, personality trait plays a moderating effect, and psychological empowerment plays a mediating effect. Finally, this paper draws inspiration from the formation mechanism diagram of work well-being and then gives some suggestions to improve the work well-being of young teachers in universities. On one hand, universities and individuals should work together to cultivate positive psychological qualities of young teachers, meanwhile, it is hoped that universities improve the teacher professional development mechanism to meet the self-realization needs of young teachers. On the other hand, the whole society should work together to strengthen the top-level design of the teacher system and enhance the professional honor of young teachers.

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