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How to cite: Wang Q, Jian Z. Workplace Support and Job Burnout Among Chinese Preschool Teachers: The Mediating Role of Job Enthusiasm. Textile & Leather Review. 2026; 9:1647-1661. <https://doi.org/10.31881/TLR.2026.1647>

How to link: <https://doi.org/10.31881/TLR.2026.1647>

Published: 25 April 2026



Workplace Support and Job Burnout Among Chinese Preschool Teachers: The Mediating Role of Job Enthusiasm

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Article

<https://doi.org/10.31881/TLR.2026.1647>

Published 25 April 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines the associations between workplace support, job enthusiasm, and job burnout among Chinese preschool teachers, with a particular focus on the mediating role of job enthusiasm. Based on cross-sectional survey data collected from preschool educators across multiple regions in China, the results indicate that perceived workplace support is positively associated with job enthusiasm and negatively associated with job burnout. Structural equation modeling further reveals that job enthusiasm partially mediates the relationship between workplace support and burnout.

By focusing on Chinese preschool educators, this study aims to reveal a universal psychological mechanism underlying organizational behavior—linking workplace support, job enthusiasm, and job burnout—which holds important reference value for enhancing human resource effectiveness and sustainable innovation in cross-disciplinary fields related to the textile industry. The findings suggest that supportive organizational environments are associated with higher levels of job enthusiasm, which in turn are linked to lower levels of burnout. This psychological mechanism provides a cross-industry theoretical model and offers practical implications for managers and policymakers in innovation-driven sectors, such as the textile industry, where employee well-being and sustainable human resource management are critical.

KEYWORDS

workplace support, job enthusiasm, job burnout, Mediation analysis, Textile Industry Application

INTRODUCTION

Job burnout is one of the major concerns in schools across the world. This has particularly been associated with teachers due to the high expectations and emotional labor that accompany the profession. However, the implications of teacher burnout and workplace well-being extend beyond the field of education and hold significant reference value for industries that rely heavily on high-quality human resources and continuous innovation. In particular, the textile industry, which is currently undergoing technological upgrading and industrial transformation, increasingly depends on employees' creativity, emotional engagement, and sustainable work motivation. Therefore, understanding the psychological mechanisms that influence job enthusiasm and burnout is not only applicable to educational settings but also highly relevant to innovation-driven industrial sectors such as textiles. Burnout is an essential concern for preschool teachers in China who have to deal with teaching tasks combined with societal pressures and expectations from parents and other authorities [1]. Similar challenges can be observed in the textile industry, where employees engaged in areas such as new material research and development, fashion design, and smart manufacturing management often face complex job demands and high professional expectations. In such contexts, job burnout has become a critical factor associated with employees' innovation capacity, productivity, and long-term career sustainability. Consequently, employee burnout in textile-related industries may lead to innovation stagnation, quality decline, and talent loss, underscoring the importance of supportive organizational environments across sectors.

A major condition of burnout for the teacher is emotional weariness, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Burnout is negatively associated with teachers' well-being and their relationships with children. Thus, burnout is linked to poorer educational outcomes. There is a high need to reduce burnout in preschool education. This is because, at preschool age, children formulate an important base for all aspects of cognitive and affective development [2].

A great deal of literature suggests that workplace support is one of the most relevant mitigation approaches for burnout for diverse occupations, including education. Such support in the workplace can vary from emotional support from colleagues to administrative endorsement by superiors and concrete tools that help reduce the challenges of teaching [3]. Supportive work environments are associated with higher levels of teachers' job satisfaction, motivation, and devotion to their duties. In preschool education, where educators

face different stressors, understanding the impact of workplace support is particularly important. Although the earlier literature demonstrates the role of support in preventing burnout, it does not adequately explore the mechanisms beneath the Chinese cultural context, nor does it do so within the walls of education [4].

Previous research grounded in the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) framework has demonstrated that job resources are closely associated with positive work-related states, such as employee engagement, while simultaneously being linked to lower levels of job burnout [5]. Empirical evidence has consistently shown that perceived support from the workplace is closely associated with employees' well-being and work-related satisfaction, serving as an important psychological resource in demanding occupational contexts [6].

Inner job enthusiasm refers to the enthusiasm and dedication towards a position shown by a teacher. That state is also closely related to burnout levels; educators who are under higher levels of job enthusiasm have higher degrees of purpose and resistance which may help buffer stressors associated with teaching [7]. This enthusiasm may encourage teachers to connect emotionally with the students to further develop the classroom and hone the learning environment of students. While job enthusiasm may elevate overall job satisfaction, it may also play a role in alleviating burnout. Consequently, there is an immediate need to investigate the degree to which workplace support is associated with higher levels of job enthusiasm at work and how this job enthusiasm in turn relates to burnout [8].

This study is conducted to investigate the mediating effect of job enthusiasm between workplace support and job burnout among Chinese preschool educators. By focusing on this specific target population, the study is planned to identify unique cultural and occupational factors informing the experiences of preschool instructors in China [9]. Understanding how supportive environments are associated with enthusiasm and burnout may inform interventions and policies meant to promote teacher well-being and retention in Chinese preschool education.

More broadly, the psychological mechanism examined in this study—linking workplace support, job enthusiasm, and job burnout—provides a solid theoretical foundation for cross-disciplinary research related to the textile industry. The findings offer valuable insights for textile enterprises seeking to design more effective human resource strategies to address workforce stress, enhance employee enthusiasm, and respond to the challenges of industrial transformation.

Hypothesis

Three theoretical assumptions postulate three core relationships: workplace support increases Chinese preschool teachers' job enthusiasm as supportive contexts meet teachers' emotional and professional needs and therefore should increase motivation and involvement [10]. Elevated job enthusiasm is connected with reduced job burnout because enthusiastic teachers are better able to derive personal meanings from their roles and build a protective factor against pressure. Job enthusiasm is related to the mediating function among workplace support and burnout; thereby, support generates enthusiasm which in turn diminishes the burnout effect. Based on Self-Determination Theory, ideas are developed as supportive circumstances fulfill inherent motivations, thus increasing resilience to burnout [11].

H1: Workplace support positively influences job enthusiasm among preschool teachers.

H2: Higher job enthusiasm is associated with lower levels of job burnout.

H3: Job enthusiasm mediates the relationship between workplace support and job burnout.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Workplace Support in Educational Settings

In a school setting, support in the workplace is the provision of resources and assistance by colleagues, managers, and the company [12]. There are three kinds of support: emotional, administrative, and peer support. Emotional support refers to the ability to understand, sympathize with, and encourage others; this is usually done by colleagues or superiors who can help teachers in the emotional aspects of their job. Administrative support involves the material support and flexibility offered by the institution, such as availability of instructional materials, workloads that are manageable, and assessment procedures that are fair. Peer support is one of the critical forms and refers to the sense of unity and collaborative nature among the teaching fraternity, through which members can share resources and strategies with each other while providing mutual encouragement. These kinds of support together contribute to a more favorable working environment and enable teachers to deal with the complexities of their roles [13].

It has been demonstrated that at work, support in the workplace reduces job pressure and increases the job satisfaction of the teachers. A study demonstrates that when the educators feel supported by the institution,

they are better able to handle the professional problems they face, thereby reducing tension and increasing commitment to teaching [14]. Good work environment fosters positive emotions that intensify job satisfaction and sense of belonging among the instructors in school communities. In addition, in emotionally challenging educational settings, a collaborative environment minimizes feelings of alienation, which antedates burnout. The preschool education setting is usually high in emotional demands hence working environments that are less oppressive are very helpful in well-equipped educators with psychological reserves when interacting with their young clients [15].

Job Enthusiasm and Its Significance in Education

Job enthusiasm is the natural interest, energy, and commitment a person has towards his or her work. Unlike work engagement, which emphasizes sustained behavioral involvement and cognitive absorption in work tasks, job enthusiasm in the present study refers primarily to an affective–motivational orientation toward one’s job, reflecting teachers’ emotional enjoyment, intrinsic interest, and positive valuation of their work rather than task-related intensity or persistence. In the school setting, especially for pre-school teachers, professional enthusiasm is crucial because it has a direct impact on the quality of interaction and involvement with young learners. Enthusiastic teachers are likely to approach their work in a positive manner, invest more time in their professional improvement, and create an interactive classroom environment that encourages learning [16]. This internal motivation is particularly valuable for pre-school teachers. They require enormous levels of energy and patience in ensuring that the developmental needs are met by their children. Job enthusiasm not only goes a long way to heighten individual well-being, but it also develops their capacity to handle the emotionality of the job [17].

Numerous studies have been held to show that employment passion positively influences teachers' motivations, job satisfaction, as well as the quality teacher-student interaction. When educators are intrinsically motivated, they experience a feeling of fulfillment that can strengthen relationships with students, thereby developing a comfortable learning environment [18]. Passion makes educators put more creativity and commitment into their job, hence improving student's involvement and academic performance. Passionate educators are less likely to get exhausted or lose interest since their passion for teaching protects

them from challenges they face. Having job enthusiasm among preschool teachers thus becomes good for their welfare and enriches the experience of schooling for children [19].

Job Burnout: Causes, and Consequences

Job burnout is a psychological condition triggered by prolonged exposure to job-related pressures. The three dimensions of this syndrome include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion involves the feeling of having run out of emotional energy or being drained. This commonly arises when an individual is heavily overburdened with his workload in the workplace [20]. Depersonalization refers to a state in which teachers develop emotional distancing or cynical attitudes toward their students. It reduces sympathy and care for teaching. A low level of personal accomplishment means a teacher feels ineffective and leads to irritation and decreased motivation. All these factors combined affect the professional effectiveness, personal well-being, and relationship with students, that is why burnout is an urgent problem in the sphere of education.

Talking about the state of Chinese preschool education, the factor of teacher burnout has become very significant due to high expectations and lack of support. The pressure to meet academic and social benchmarks set by education authorities and parents is of great significance on the shoulders of Chinese preschool educators who often have fewer resources at their disposal [21]. The pressure alongside poor social recognition and restricted scope for job advancement has led to more burnout cases. Cultural expectations of hard work and dedication heighten the stress teachers feel since they may be obliged to perform severe duties with little support. This would therefore mean that the burnout suffered by Chinese preschool teachers affects the individual as well as the general quality of preschool education in China [22].

Theoretical Framework

This study uses three key theories to explain the association of workplace support to both job enthusiasm and the burnout reduction of preschool teachers: Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Job Demands-Resources Theory (JD-R), and Social Exchange Theory (SET). Self-Determination Theory posits that people have universal psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness that, when satisfied, enhance intrinsic motivation [23]. In the context of education, workplace support satisfies these needs by providing job autonomy through instructional decision making, competence through essential tools and training, and

relatedness through significant connections among colleagues. According to JD-R Theory, job resources such as workplace support compensate for the job demands on workload and emotional labor that causes burnout. This approach maintains that resources are motivators that minimize the pressures of demands and yet promote activation and enthusiasm; they are associated with lower levels of burnout. According to Social Exchange Theory, supportive workplace relationships bring about mutualistic relationships to ensure reciprocity because support would make a teacher feel valued, hence fostering their commitment and passion toward teaching [24].

These three concepts provide different yet complementary views of the interrelations between workplace support, job enthusiasm, and burnout. SDT focuses on intrinsic motivation through the fulfillment of psychological needs, JD-R Theory underscores the role of job resources in reducing the impact of demands, and SET focuses on the social reciprocity that supportive work environments generate [25]. Collectively, these suggestions posit that as long as support is of the kind provided to the preschool teachers appropriately, such support both caters for their psychological needs and fulfills the professional needs they have in an environment. At the same time, it promotes the positive aspect of a dynamics exchange that triggers job enthusiasm. Combining these aspects, therefore strengthens the study in that multiple dimensions for which supportive conditions can contribute towards enthusiasm or burnout reduction are produced [26].

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Participants

This study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine the associations among workplace support, job enthusiasm, and job burnout among preschool teachers in China. Data were collected using a structured self-report questionnaire administered to preschool educators from multiple regions across China to ensure diversity in institutional backgrounds and teaching contexts. Participation was voluntary, and all respondents completed the survey anonymously and signed informed consent form. And the research received ethical approval from Guangdong University of Education. The cross-sectional design allowed for the examination of relationships among the key variables at a single point in time. However, it does not permit causal inference, and therefore all findings are interpreted in terms of associations rather than causal effects.

Measures

Workplace Support.

Workplace support was measured using a widely adopted perceived organizational support scale adapted from prior research [11]. The scale assesses employees' perceptions of the extent to which their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Responses were rated on a Likert-type scale, with higher scores indicating higher perceived workplace support. In the present study, the scale demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$).

Job Enthusiasm.

Job enthusiasm was assessed using a self-report scale adapted from existing measures of work-related enthusiasm and affective motivation, which have been widely applied in educational and organizational research. The scale captures individuals' positive emotional and motivational orientation toward their work. All items were rated on a Likert-type scale, with higher scores reflecting greater job enthusiasm. The internal consistency of the scale in this study was satisfactory (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$).

Job Burnout.

Job burnout was measured using a validated burnout scale based on the Maslach Burnout framework [19,20], which assesses emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Participants responded on a Likert-type scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of burnout. The scale showed good reliability in the current sample (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.91$).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS and AMOS. First, descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analyses were performed using SPSS to examine the distributions of the variables and their interrelationships. Subsequently, structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted using AMOS to test the hypothesized mediation model.

The mediation effect of job enthusiasm in the relationship between workplace support and job burnout was examined by estimating direct and indirect effects within the SEM framework. Model fit was evaluated using standard goodness-of-fit indices, including the chi-square statistic, comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis

index (TLI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). All analyses were conducted following conventional statistical criteria.

DATA AND RESULTS

This section presents the descriptive statistics and inferential analyses examining the associations among workplace support, job enthusiasm, and job burnout, as well as the mediating role of job enthusiasm. The results are reported in relation to the study hypotheses, with corresponding tables and figures.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the central tendency and variability of workplace support, job enthusiasm, and job burnout among preschool teachers. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variables	count	mean	std	min	max
workplace_support	200	70.71	10.24	44.47	93.83
job_enthusiasm	200	44.71	7.23	27.46	65.53
burnout	200	82.63	6.49	62.21	98.17

As shown in Table 1, the mean score for workplace support was 70.71 (SD = 10.24), indicating a moderate to relatively high level of perceived support within the sample. Job enthusiasm had a mean of 44.71 (SD = 7.23), reflecting moderate levels of enthusiasm among participants. Job burnout had a mean score of 82.63 (SD = 6.49). Based on the scale used in this study, possible burnout scores range from 0 to 132. The present study does not apply established clinical cut-off scores; therefore, this value is interpreted as indicating relatively elevated burnout levels within the sample rather than a categorical classification. These descriptive results provide an overview of the sample characteristics prior to inferential analysis.

Correlational Analysis

Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to examine the associations among workplace support, job enthusiasm, and job burnout. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlational

Variables	workplace_support	job_enthusiasm	burnout
workplace_support	1	0.76	-0.55
job_enthusiasm	0.76	1	-0.61
burnout	-0.55	-0.61	1

Workplace support was positively correlated with job enthusiasm ($r = 0.76$), indicating that higher perceived workplace support was associated with higher levels of job enthusiasm. Workplace support was negatively correlated with job burnout ($r = -0.55$), suggesting that higher support was associated with lower burnout levels. Job enthusiasm also showed a negative correlation with job burnout ($r = -0.61$), indicating that higher enthusiasm was associated with lower burnout. All correlations were statistically significant

Regression Analysis

Effect of Workplace Support on Job Enthusiasm

A regression analysis was conducted to examine the association between workplace support and job enthusiasm. As shown in Table 3, workplace support was significantly associated with job enthusiasm ($\beta = 0.535, p < 0.001$).

Table 3. Regression Analysis (Workplace Support On Job Enthusiasm)

	Coef.	Std.Err.	t	P> t	[0.025
Intercept	6.891284	2.337639	2.947968	0.003583	2.28142
workplace_support	0.534913	0.03272	16.34803	1.38E-38	0.470388

The results indicate that higher levels of perceived workplace support were associated with higher levels of job enthusiasm, supporting Hypothesis 1.

Effect of Workplace Support and Job Enthusiasm on Burnout

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the associations of workplace support and job enthusiasm with job burnout. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Regression Analysis (Workplace Support Job Enthusiasm on Burnout)

	Coef.	Std.Err.	t	P> t	[0.025
Intercept	110.117	2.577094	42.72915	1.40E-101	105.0348
workplace_support	-0.13649	0.05412	-2.52204	0.012459	-0.24322
job_enthusiasm	-0.39882	0.076682	-5.20101	4.95E-07	-0.55005

Both workplace support and job enthusiasm were significantly and negatively associated with job burnout. Job enthusiasm showed a stronger association with burnout compared to workplace support. These findings support Hypothesis 2.

Mediation Analysis

Mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether job enthusiasm mediated the association between workplace support and job burnout. The results indicated that workplace support was significantly associated with job enthusiasm, which in turn was significantly associated with job burnout. When job enthusiasm was included in the model, the direct association between workplace support and burnout remained significant but was reduced in magnitude, indicating partial mediation.

Figure 1 illustrates the direct and indirect paths among workplace support, job enthusiasm, and job burnout. The results support Hypothesis 3, indicating that job enthusiasm partially mediates the association between workplace support and job burnout.

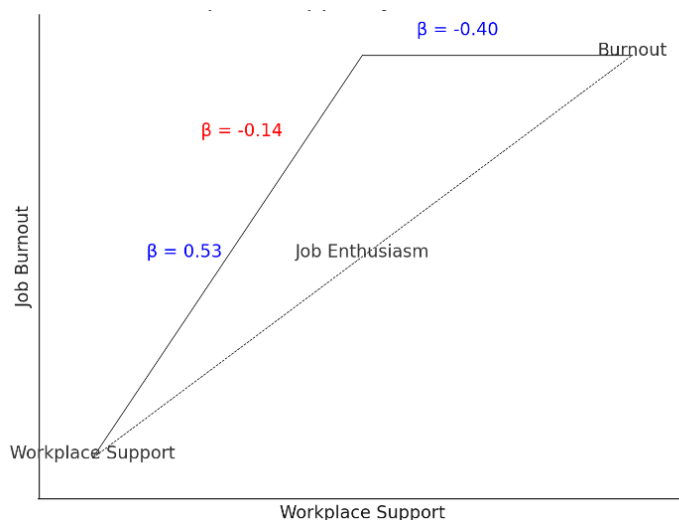


Figure 1. Workplace Support, Job Enthusiasm, and Burnout

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationships among workplace support, job enthusiasm, and job burnout among Chinese preschool teachers. The results indicate that perceived workplace support is positively associated with job enthusiasm and negatively associated with job burnout. In addition, job enthusiasm is negatively associated with burnout and partially mediates the relationship between workplace support and job burnout. These findings suggest that preschool teachers who perceive higher levels of workplace support also tend to report higher job enthusiasm, which is in turn associated with lower levels of burnout. At the same time, workplace support remains directly related to burnout even after accounting for job enthusiasm, indicating that multiple pathways may link supportive work environments to teachers' well-being.

Importantly, the findings should be interpreted in light of the study's cross-sectional design. The observed associations do not allow for causal conclusions, and alternative explanations—such as teachers experiencing burnout perceiving lower levels of workplace support—cannot be ruled out. Nevertheless, the results provide empirical support for a relational pattern in which workplace support and job enthusiasm are closely linked to burnout experiences among Chinese preschool educators.

From a practical perspective, the results highlight the potential relevance of fostering supportive organizational environments and encouraging positive work-related enthusiasm in preschool settings. Although causal effects cannot be inferred, strengthening workplace support and attending to teachers' motivational states may be associated with lower burnout and improved occupational well-being. These insights may also offer reference value for other innovation-driven sectors, such as the textile industry, where employee enthusiasm and well-being are closely tied to sustainable human resource management.

Author Contributions

Qiaoli Wang and Ziting Jian contributed equally to this study and are co-first authors. Qiaoli Wang was responsible for the research design, data collection, and initial manuscript drafting. Ziting Jian contributed to the theoretical framework development, data analysis, and manuscript revision. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding

This project was supported by Guangdong University of Education 2025 Annual University-Level Teaching Quality and Teaching Reform Project (No. 2025jxgg30).

Ethical Approval and Informed Consent

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Guangdong University of Education, and was performed in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before they completed the questionnaire.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all preschool educators who voluntarily participated in this study and shared their experiences. The authors also appreciate the valuable comments and suggestions provided by the reviewers, which helped improve the quality of this manuscript.

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