

The impact of work environment and workload on job satisfaction: An empirical study of teachers in Chinese private higher educational institutes

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Abstract: This research endeavors to examine how the working conditions and professional demands influence the occupational contentment of educators within China's private tertiary education sector. By distributing structured questionnaires to 300 academic administrators across nine universities in Anhui Province and utilizing AMOS 23.0 software for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis, this research examines the relationships among these three aspects. The results indicate that an improved workplace atmosphere positively contributes to job satisfaction, while excessive job responsibilities have a notable adverse effect. The study recommends that universities should optimize their work environments and reasonably control teachers' workloads to enhance overall job satisfaction.

Keywords: Chinese Private Universities, Job Satisfaction, Structural Equation Modeling, Work Environment, Workload.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background and Significance

With the accelerated growth of higher education in China, private universities have become more prominent within the broader educational framework. However, despite their expansion, these institutions still encounter significant challenges when compared to public universities, especially concerning resource distribution, organizational frameworks, and support for faculty development [1, 2]. Educators, who are key players in both instructional delivery and administrative roles, significantly influence the comprehensive academic journey. Their job satisfaction is not only critical for their individual career advancement and psychological health but also directly affects the quality of instruction and student achievements [3]. Consequently, comprehending the elements that shape teacher satisfaction is vital for enhancing the performance of educational establishments, particularly in the context of private universities.

Job satisfaction is a multifaceted concept influenced by various factors. Among these, work environment and workload have been widely acknowledged as key determinants [4]. A supportive work environment can boost teachers' motivation, foster a sense of belonging, and elevate their overall job satisfaction, resulting in greater levels of engagement and dedication to their roles. On the other hand, an overwhelming workload may induce stress, lead to burnout, and diminish job satisfaction, ultimately impacting both teachers' well-being and the quality of education they deliver [5]. Consequently, examining the influence of these two critical variables—work environment and workload—on job satisfaction is not only of considerable theoretical interest but also provides valuable insights into enhancing the professional lives of educators and improving educational standards in private universities.

1.2. Research Objectives and Questions

This study aims to comprehensively investigate the pathways through which work environment and workload affect job satisfaction among educators in private universities. Specifically, the research will tackle the following key inquiries:

- (1) Does the work environment exert a substantial influence on teachers' job satisfaction?
- (2) Is there a significant relationship between workload and teachers' job satisfaction?

Furthermore, by addressing these questions, this study aspires to furnish empirical data that can guide the enhancement of faculty management strategies in private universities and support the formulation of pertinent educational policies.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Work Environment and Job Satisfaction

The work environment is widely acknowledged as a key determinant impacting employee satisfaction, and it spans multiple dimensions. Physical, psychological, and social aspects [6]. An optimal work environment generally comprises well-maintained facilities, stable interpersonal connections, robust managerial backing, and equitable organizational structures. These components are crucial because they directly influence employees' emotional health, behavioral outcomes, and their overall dedication to the organization [7]. A conducive work setting not only fosters a sense of belonging but also enhances workforce motivation, resulting in elevated levels of job satisfaction.

A considerable amount of research spanning various countries and sectors has consistently identified a favorable association between job satisfaction and the work environment. For instance, Nyamubi [8] carried out a study among educators and found that teachers' job contentment is strongly tied to the quality of their working conditions. Likewise, Kurnianto, et al. [9] illustrated that in Indonesian universities, an enabling work setting is notably linked with elevated job satisfaction. The outcomes from these investigations highlight the significance of work environment elements such as physical infrastructure, administrative practices, and interpersonal dynamics in promoting teacher contentment.

In the context of Chinese higher education, Jaycin [10] highlighted that faculty members' job satisfaction is deeply influenced by their work environment. Specifically, the study revealed that supportive institutional practices, fair organizational policies, and positive campus culture significantly enhance faculty job satisfaction in Chinese universities. On the other hand, Kasbuntoro, et al. [11] found that poor working conditions in the banking sector were linked to lower job satisfaction. These results suggest that improving physical facilities, increasing interpersonal support, and optimizing organizational culture are essential strategies for enhancing teacher satisfaction in various sectors, particularly in higher education.

2.2. Workload and Job Satisfaction

Workload pertains to the quantity and complexity of tasks that an employee must accomplish within a designated timeframe. It is generally classified into two categories: quantitative load and qualitative load [12]. Quantitative load highlights the total number of tasks and the time constraints linked with their completion, whereas qualitative load relates to the intricacy of tasks and the psychological stress they place on employees [13]. In the realm of education, workload is frequently defined by the count of classes, administrative responsibilities, and the duration required for research and assessment.

The existing body of knowledge strongly indicates that elevated workload is commonly linked to diminished job satisfaction, heightened burnout, and amplified turnover inclinations among staff members Chaaban and Du [14]. Mukhtar [15] highlighted that extended exposure to high workload among educators can result in notable declines in job contentment, with serious repercussions for teachers' career stability and well-being. Overwhelmed instructors often encounter physical and

emotional depletion, which not only diminishes their contentment but also adversely impacts their performance and engagement with students.

In contrast, settings with balanced workloads, well-defined job roles, and achievable expectations tend to yield more favorable work experiences and elevated job satisfaction. Nevertheless, certain studies, including Naheed, et al. [16] have indicated that in specific sectors, employees might view high work demands as an opportunity that promotes a feeling of achievement and career advancement. Despite these insights, the predominant perspective in the literature underscores the detrimental impacts of excessive workload on job contentment, especially in education and other high-pressure occupations.

2.3. Concept and Influencing Factors of Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a complex notion that encompasses the comprehensive assessment of an individual's work experience, integrating both emotional and cognitive elements [17, 18]. It mirrors employees' perspectives on their jobs, which are influenced by various factors such as compensation, career progression opportunities, workplace setting, task load, work-life equilibrium, interpersonal dynamics with coworkers, and institutional guidelines [19, 20]. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory further classifies these influences into two categories: "motivating elements" and "maintenance elements." Motivating elements, like accomplishments, acknowledgment, and accountability, are inherent to the role and contribute to enhanced contentment, whereas maintenance elements, encompassing remuneration, work conditions, and organizational regulations, are external and mainly deter dissatisfaction [21].

In educational settings, teachers' job satisfaction significantly influences their motivation to teach, the quality of interactions with students, and the overall atmosphere within the school or university [18]. A high level of job satisfaction among teachers is linked to increased teaching effectiveness, which, in turn, positively affects student outcomes and the educational environment as a whole. Conversely, dissatisfaction can lead to disengagement, reduced productivity, and higher turnover rates.

2.4. Construction of Theoretical Framework

This study develops its theoretical framework based on three key theories: Spillover Theory, the Effort-Recovery Model, and the JD-R (Job Demands-Resources) model.

Spillover Theory posits that experiences in one domain of life, particularly work, can spill over into other domains, such as family and personal life. Positive work experiences can generate positive emotional outcomes that extend beyond the workplace, thereby enhancing job satisfaction [22]. In the context of teaching, a positive work environment is expected to lead to greater job satisfaction, which can subsequently improve teachers' interactions with students and their overall work-life balance.

The Effort-Recovery Framework highlights that extended high-intensity labor can exhaust an individual's ability to recuperate, resulting in reduced job satisfaction and heightened burnout [23]. In the teaching profession, this framework indicates that excessive workloads without adequate rest periods can adversely affect educators' well-being and their contentment with their roles. This emphasizes the significance of harmonizing work requirements and recovery chances to sustain elevated levels of job satisfaction.

The Job Demands-Resources Theory (JD-R Theory) amalgamates the ideas of occupational demands and professional resources, suggesting that the interplay between these two elements impacts employee health and productivity [24]. As per the JD-R theory, occupational demands (like workload and task intricacy) can induce stress and exhaustion if not counterbalanced by sufficient resources (such as organizational backing, a favorable work environment, and ample time for recovery). This theoretical model offers a thorough structure for comprehending how both workload and work environment influence job satisfaction.

Based on these theoretical foundations, this research develops a conceptual structure to investigate the connections among work environment, workload, and job satisfaction, as depicted in Figure 1. The

framework highlights the dynamic interplay between these factors and their combined impact on educators' contentment within the context of private universities.

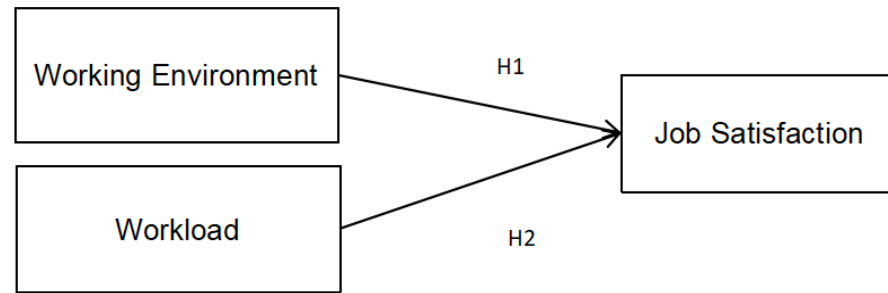


Figure 1.
Conceptual framework.

3. Development of Research Hypotheses

A substantial body of empirical research has shown that the work environment significantly influences employee job satisfaction. It is widely recognized that a positive work setting can result in greater job contentment by improving employees' emotional well-being and fostering an atmosphere conducive to personal and professional development. Specifically, a high-quality work environment usually comprises comfortable physical conditions, harmonious interpersonal dynamics, supportive leadership, and sufficient organizational resources. These components collectively foster a sense of stability, security, and motivation among staff, which are essential for their job satisfaction [25]. Studies have consistently indicated that these environmental aspects positively impact the overall job fulfillment of workers across various sectors and industries.

For example, Yayah and Hariyati [26] emphasize that a positive work environment fosters employees' psychological well-being, which, in turn, enhances their job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Similarly, Tengku, et al. [27] pointed out that fairness and respect in the organizational climate, along with peer support and transparent management practices, are core dimensions that significantly influence job satisfaction among teachers. These factors not only improve teachers' mental and emotional health but also contribute to greater job stability and motivation. Additionally, Fisher, et al. [28] examined the perspectives of university faculty members and found that teachers' satisfaction with managerial support, resource allocation, and organizational culture positively correlated with their overall job satisfaction. These studies highlight that when the work environment includes fair treatment, adequate support, and positive relationships, teachers are more likely to feel valued and engaged in their work.

The significance of a positive work environment in enhancing job contentment is further substantiated by findings across various sectors. When educators are equipped with the essential resources, a nurturing work culture, and avenues for professional advancement, they are more prone to feel increased fulfillment in their roles. Conversely, an adverse work setting marked by inadequate resources, absence of support, and a detrimental organizational climate tends to result in dissatisfaction, disconnection, and elevated attrition rates. Considering the empirical data that corroborates the beneficial correlation between work environment and job satisfaction, the subsequent hypothesis is proposed:

H₁: The work environment has a significant positive impact on teachers' job satisfaction.

In contrast, the workload is another critical factor that has been consistently shown to affect job satisfaction, particularly in high-demand professions such as teaching. Empirical evidence indicates that excessive workloads often lead to negative emotional and mental health outcomes, which in turn reduce job satisfaction. Hart and Staveland [29] found that prolonged exposure to high levels of workload

negatively affects employees' psychological well-being and reduces their overall satisfaction with their work. The combination of excessive task demands, time pressures, and insufficient resources can overwhelm employees, leading to stress, burnout, and decreased motivation.

For teachers, workload is often exacerbated by the complexity and variety of tasks they are required to manage, including lesson planning, grading, administrative duties, and research responsibilities. Hayman [30] emphasized that high-intensity tasks, combined with tight deadlines, contribute significantly to work-related stress, which directly impacts job satisfaction. In academic environments, where teachers must balance both teaching and research responsibilities, excessive workload can be particularly detrimental. Sari and Iqbal [31] empirically demonstrated that university teachers frequently face substantial time pressure due to unreasonable course scheduling and an overload of administrative tasks. These factors create a situation in which teachers feel overwhelmed, ultimately leading to a decline in job satisfaction.

Wikansari and Pawesti [32] further corroborate these findings, noting that when the quantity of tasks exceeds an employee's capacity to cope, it leads not only to stress and burnout but also to a decline in employees' sense of identification with their jobs. This, in turn, results in diminished job satisfaction and lower overall performance. It is evident from the literature that excessive workload can exert a substantial adverse effect on teachers' job satisfaction, particularly in university settings where the work demands are high and often unpredictable. Workload not only impacts the physical and mental well-being of teachers but also reduces their enthusiasm and dedication to their teaching roles, resulting in heightened turnover intentions and reduced job satisfaction.

Given these findings, it is apparent that workload is a pivotal factor in shaping teachers' job satisfaction. When workload is excessive and not adequately managed, it can substantially erode teachers' job satisfaction and contribute to burnout. Therefore, drawing from the above literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₂: Workload has a significant negative impact on teachers' job satisfaction.

This hypothesis posits that, unlike the work environment, which boosts job satisfaction through favorable conditions, a high workload has an adverse impact on teachers' job satisfaction by introducing stress, fatigue, and emotional strain. These findings suggest that universities and other educational institutions must carefully consider both the work environment and workload when developing strategies and initiatives aimed at enhancing teacher contentment and retention. A balanced approach that ensures a supportive work environment while managing workload expectations is crucial for promoting job satisfaction and maintaining a healthy, productive workforce.

4. Research Methodology

To ensure the representativeness and scientific rigor of the data, this research utilized a proportionate stratified random sampling technique to select participants from private universities in Anhui Province, China. A total of nine out of fourteen private universities in the region were chosen, based on the proportion of their faculty size. This sampling approach guarantees that the selected universities reflect the diversity in terms of size, resources, and faculty characteristics, which are crucial factors in the context of private higher education institutions. The sample size for each institution was determined proportionally, ensuring that larger institutions contributed a greater number of respondents to mirror their larger faculty pools. In total, 300 questionnaires were distributed to teachers across these nine universities, and 233 valid responses were collected, resulting in an effective response rate of 77.7%. This substantial response rate strengthens the reliability of the data, enabling a thorough examination of the factors influencing job satisfaction among university teachers.

The sample comprised teachers from various academic departments as well as administrative staff members, including assistant registrars, senior assistant registrars, deputy registrars, and registrars. This inclusion of different administrative positions ensures that the sample was diverse, capturing a broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives within the institutions. The study also aimed to include participants of different genders, ages, educational backgrounds, and years of service, ensuring that the

sample structure was balanced and reflective of the population of university teachers. By considering these demographic factors, the study ensured that the findings could be generalized to a wider population of private university teachers in Anhui Province.

The main data collection tool utilized in this study was a structured questionnaire, designed to evaluate three key variables: work environment, workload, and job satisfaction. The questionnaire's content was grounded in well-established and widely validated scales, such as those employed by Raziq and Maulabakhsh [25], Fisher, et al. [28] and Sari and Iqbal [31] with suitable modifications to ensure cultural and contextual relevance for Chinese universities. The survey comprised 50 closed-ended questions that examined the core constructs, along with 8 demographic queries. The closed-ended questions predominantly used a five-point Likert scale to gauge participants' views and sentiments regarding the work environment, workload, and job satisfaction, enabling a quantitative evaluation of these factors.

To ensure clarity and cultural adaptability, the questionnaire underwent a thorough pre-testing and revision process. During this phase, the language of the questionnaire was simplified to enhance understanding among respondents, especially for teachers who may not be familiar with academic research terminology. Additionally, response options were consolidated to reduce ambiguity, and category labels were added for clearer interpretation of questions. The revised version of the questionnaire was then subjected to reliability and validity testing. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each scale exceeded the threshold of 0.7, indicating good internal consistency and suggesting that the instrument was reliable for capturing the intended constructs.

For data analysis, the study utilized SPSS 23.0 to perform initial data cleaning, descriptive statistics, and exploratory factor analysis (EFA). EFA was employed to evaluate the structural validity and dimensionality of the measurement scales, ensuring that the scales accurately captured the underlying constructs they were designed to measure. This step was essential in determining whether the scales used in the questionnaire were suitable for the research context. Following the EFA, the study applied AMOS 23.0 graphical software to develop structural equation models (SEM), which facilitated a more sophisticated examination of the relationships among the latent variables of work environment, workload, and job satisfaction. SEM was selected because it allows for the simultaneous investigation of multiple causal pathways, aligning closely with the research objectives of this study. Through SEM, the study could assess the fit quality of both the measurement model and the structural model, offering a thorough comprehension of the interrelations between the key variables.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, the research strictly followed ethical guidelines throughout the data collection process. Participants were thoroughly informed about the study's purpose, and their involvement was entirely voluntary. The investigation prioritized minimal intervention to guarantee that teachers' responses mirrored their genuine perceptions and experiences within their actual work environments, free from external influences. All surveys were completed anonymously to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of the respondents. Written consent was secured from all participants, and the project received approval from the participating universities, ensuring adherence to ethical research standards.

To enhance flexibility and boost response rates, the questionnaires were distributed in both paper format and via Google Forms, enabling participants to select the most convenient method for completion. This dual distribution strategy helped ensure a broad range of participants could be reached, including those who might not have access to physical copies of the questionnaire.

In summary, the research methodology employed in this study ensured that the data collection process was rigorous, culturally appropriate, and ethically sound. The combination of a proportionate stratified sampling method, a well-tested data collection instrument, and sophisticated data analysis techniques provides a solid foundation for the study's conclusions and enhances the reliability of the findings.

5. Data Processing and Results

5.1. Data Processing

In this study, data analysis was rigorously conducted, employing systematic data cleaning and statistical modeling techniques to uncover the inherent relationships between work environment, workload, and job satisfaction among administrative faculty in private higher education institutions in Anhui Province, China. The data collection process included an initial step of cleaning, which involved identifying and excluding incomplete or invalid responses, as well as any mechanical answers that did not provide meaningful data. This stage was crucial to ensuring the representativeness and quality of the final dataset. After the cleaning process, a total of 233 valid samples were retained for further analysis, representing a valid response rate of 77.7% from the initial 300 distributed questionnaires.

A descriptive statistical examination was carried out to analyze the general attributes of the participant pool. Average ratings were computed for the three primary factors: workplace conditions, professional responsibilities, and job fulfillment. The average scores for these variables were found to be 3.47, 3.90, and 3.37, respectively, suggesting a moderate to high level of perceived workload among the faculty. The standard deviations of 0.49, 0.46, and 0.46 indicate a relatively consistent pattern of responses, though there is some variation in teachers' perceptions of their work environment and job satisfaction. Specifically, while teachers generally rated their work environment and job satisfaction as moderately positive, the higher mean score for workload (3.90) suggests that the faculty members experience considerable work pressure. This result indicates that teachers are often faced with significant workload demands, yet maintain a reasonably positive outlook toward their work environment and job satisfaction (Table 1).

Table 1.
Descriptive statistics results.

Variable	Mean Value (Mean)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Description
Work Environment	3.47	0.49	Teachers rate the work environment as moderately positive
Workload	3.90	0.46	Teachers generally report high workloads
Job Satisfaction	3.37	0.46	Teachers' overall job satisfaction is moderately positive

A reliability analysis was performed to ensure the internal consistency of the scales utilized to assess the key variables. The Cronbach's Alpha values for work environment ($\alpha = 0.839$) and workload ($\alpha = 0.728$) both exceeded the commonly accepted threshold of 0.7, indicating strong reliability and internal consistency for these two scales. However, the Cronbach's Alpha value for job satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.647$) was marginally below the ideal benchmark of 0.7. Despite this, the result was considered acceptable, given that job satisfaction was evaluated using only three items. A Cronbach's Alpha of 0.647 remains within a reasonable range for scales with a limited number of items, suggesting that the measure for job satisfaction is sufficiently reliable (Table 2).

Table 2.
Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis table.

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's α	Reliability Evaluation
Work Environment	Multiple	0.839	Good internal consistency
Workload	Multiple	0.728	Good internal consistency
Job Satisfaction	3 items	0.647	Acceptable (fewer items)

For the validity assessment, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were utilized to evaluate the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis. The KMO value of 0.761 suggested that the dataset was appropriate for factor analysis, as values exceeding 0.6 are typically deemed acceptable for this type of analysis. Furthermore, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a

significant result ($p < 0.001$), confirming adequate correlation among the variables to support factor analysis. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) were subsequently conducted to investigate the dimensionality of the variables. The findings revealed that all factor loadings surpassed the 0.6 threshold, indicating robust convergent validity. Additionally, the cumulative explained variance reached 57.9%, which is regarded as satisfactory, suggesting a clear factor structure and good discriminant validity among the variables (Table 3).

Table 3.
Validity Test Results (Factor Analysis).

Test Indicator	Value	Evaluation Criteria	Conclusion
KMO	0.761	> 0.7 indicates suitability for factor analysis	Meets factor analysis requirements
Bartlett's Test	$p < 0.001$	Significance level should be less than 0.05	Significant, suitable for factor analysis
Factor Loadings	> 0.6	> 0.5 indicates good convergent validity	All variables meet standards
Cumulative Variance	57.9%	> 50% indicates good model explanatory power	Clear factor structure, sufficient explanation

To further validate the theoretical mechanisms through which work environment and workload influence job satisfaction, a Structural Equation Model (SEM) was developed using AMOS 23.0. SEM facilitates the examination of intricate relationships among multiple variables, including latent (unobserved) factors, which is essential for testing the hypotheses in this study. The constructed model aimed to investigate the direct and indirect impacts of work environment and workload on job satisfaction, with work environment and workload serving as exogenous factors affecting the endogenous variable, job satisfaction. The finalized structural framework is illustrated in Figure 2.

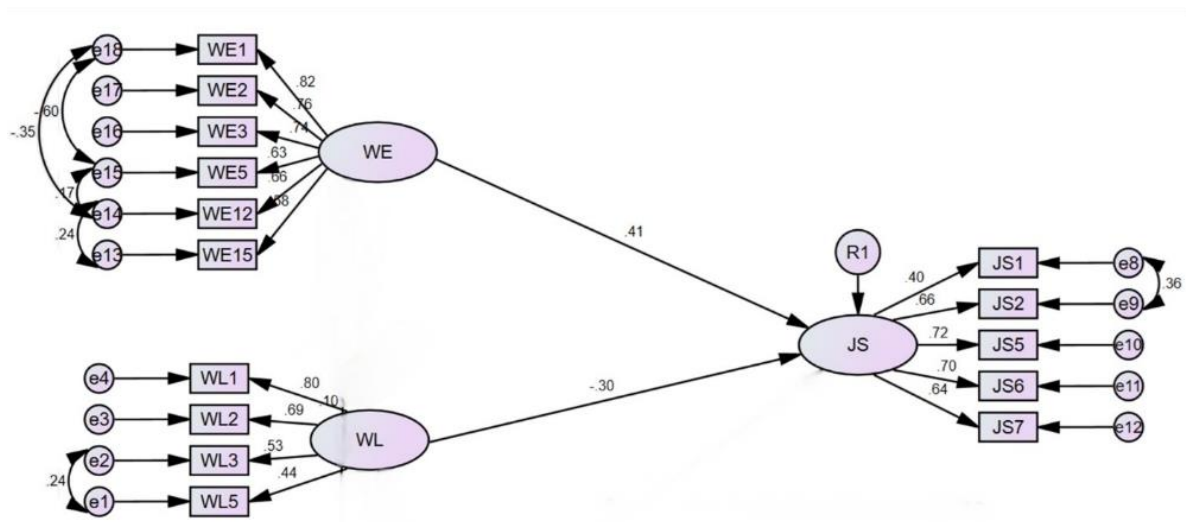


Figure 2.
Final revised structural model.

The results of the path analysis from the SEM uncovered notable connections among the key variables. It was determined that work environment has a substantial positive influence on teachers' job satisfaction, with a standardized path coefficient of $\beta \approx 0.47$ ($p < 0.05$). This outcome implies that an advantageous work environment, marked by supportive leadership, favorable physical conditions, and harmonious interpersonal relationships, considerably boosts job satisfaction among educators. Conversely, workload was identified as having a considerable negative effect on job satisfaction, with a standardized path coefficient of $\beta \approx -0.36$ ($p < 0.05$). This evidence suggests that excessive workload, which might include high task demands, time constraints, and administrative responsibilities, results in

diminished job satisfaction. These insights align with previous studies conducted both internationally [25, 31] and within Chinese contexts, corroborating the detrimental impact of workload and the beneficial influence of a positive work environment on job satisfaction (Table 4).

Table 4.
Path Analysis Results of Structural Equation Model.

Path	Standardized Coefficient (β)	Path	Significance (p-value)	Impact Direction	Hypothesis Result	Validation
Work Environment \rightarrow Job Satisfaction	Positive and Significant ($\beta \approx 0.47$)		$p < 0.05$	Positive Impact	Hypothesis H1	Confirmed
Workload \rightarrow Job Satisfaction	Negative and Significant ($\beta \approx -0.36$)		$p < 0.05$	Negative Impact	Hypothesis H2	Confirmed

The model's goodness-of-fit indices demonstrated that the overall fit was satisfactory. Specifically, the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) fell below the suggested threshold of 3, indicating a reasonable fit. Additionally, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was under 0.08, which also signifies an adequate fit. Furthermore, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) all surpassed the recommended benchmark of 0.90, suggesting that the model effectively captures the relationships among the key variables. Collectively, these metrics imply that the structural model utilized in this study offers a reliable depiction of the data and corroborates the theoretical framework concerning the impact of work environment and workload on teachers' job satisfaction (Table 5).

Table 5.
Goodness-of-Fit Indices for Structural Equation Model.

Fit Index	Actual Value	Recommended Threshold	Fit Evaluation
χ^2/df	2.127	< 3	Good Fit
RMSEA	0.088	< 0.08 (Acceptable)	Close to Acceptable Limit
CFI	0.893	> 0.90	Slightly Below but Acceptable
TLI	0.889	> 0.90	Slightly Below but Acceptable
GFI	0.905	> 0.90	Meets Recommended Standard

In summary, the findings of this study validate the substantial influence of work environment and workload on teachers' job satisfaction within private universities. The notable path coefficients and robust fit indices of the structural model offer empirical backing for the hypotheses that an improved work environment boosts job satisfaction, whereas elevated workloads diminish it. These results contribute to the expanding corpus of research focused on teacher job satisfaction and provide insightful guidance for university administration, indicating that enhancing the work environment and tackling workload issues should be primary focal points in strategies aimed at elevating faculty contentment and productivity. The methodological precision and compelling outcomes of this investigation delineate clear pathways for subsequent studies, as well as practical implications for policy development and institutional governance.

6. Research Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Research Conclusions

This research explores the crucial elements that shape job satisfaction among university faculty, with a specific focus on the influence of work environment and workload on teacher satisfaction. Leveraging empirical survey data gathered from private universities in China, this study utilizes structural equation modeling to assess the proposed hypotheses and examine the mechanisms through which these two factors affect job satisfaction. The main insights derived from the study are as follows:

Firstly, it is determined that the work environment exerts a substantial positive impact on teachers' job satisfaction. An optimal work environment, encompassing aspects such as comfortable working

conditions, equitable and supportive interpersonal relationships, clear managerial support, and an encouraging organizational atmosphere, significantly enhances teachers' sense of identification with their institution and boosts their job satisfaction. This conclusion aligns with prior research conducted by Raziq and Maulabakhsh [25] which illustrated that external conditions notably contribute to employee motivation and overall satisfaction. In this context, a supportive and comfortable work environment aids teachers in feeling valued, appreciated, and connected to their institutions, thereby directly elevating their job satisfaction.

Secondly, the study underscores that workload exerts a considerable negative influence on teachers' job satisfaction. Educators confront substantial demands stemming from teaching responsibilities, research obligations, and administrative duties, which frequently culminate in occupational burnout and psychological strain. These elevated demands are closely linked to a decline in job satisfaction, as educators encounter heightened pressure and a reduced sense of achievement. This observation aligns with the perspectives presented by scholars such as Hart and Staveland [33] and Hayman [30] who have highlighted that excessive workloads can act as pivotal risk factors that adversely impact both the mental well-being and job satisfaction of employees. Teachers who are overburdened are more prone to encountering job dissatisfaction and diminished work engagement, which could ultimately undermine their instructional effectiveness and long-term career stability.

Finally, the structural equation model developed in this investigation exhibits commendable fit, with all path relationships achieving statistical significance. This not only corroborates the proposed hypotheses but also signifies that the theoretical framework and variable selection employed in this study possess robust explanatory capabilities. The positive and negative associations identified within the model furnish a sturdy empirical basis for comprehending the elements that shape teachers' job satisfaction in Chinese universities. The resilience of the model reinforces its relevance for future inquiries into teacher satisfaction and provides meaningful guidance for university administrators aiming to enhance faculty contentment and overall institutional performance.

6.2. Management Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from the study, several practical recommendations are proposed for university administrators to enhance job satisfaction among faculty members:

6.2.1. Optimize the Work Environment and Foster a Positive Organizational Climate

Universities should prioritize the creation of a work environment that promotes safety, equity, respect, and support. Organizational policies should focus on providing sufficient resources, enhancing communication mechanisms, and ensuring that promotion systems are fair and transparent. A supportive work atmosphere can significantly increase teachers' sense of belonging and job satisfaction. For example, universities can invest in improving office facilities, establishing clear channels for communication, and providing faculty with opportunities for professional development. Additionally, fostering a positive organizational climate through social and cultural initiatives can help build strong interpersonal relationships among faculty members, leading to a more collaborative and supportive workplace.

6.2.2. Reasonably Allocate Teaching Tasks and Control Excessive Workload

To address the negative impact of excessive workload on job satisfaction, administrative leadership should adopt measures to monitor and balance teachers' workloads. It is important to avoid overloading teachers with administrative duties, teaching responsibilities, and evaluation pressures. Universities can implement strategies such as optimizing course scheduling to distribute teaching duties more evenly and promote teamwork among faculty members. These strategies can help reduce the overall workload burden and provide teachers with more time for research and professional development. Additionally, universities should consider implementing workload management policies that offer flexibility in task

allocation, allowing teachers to better manage their time and responsibilities. By promoting a healthier work-life balance, universities can enhance teachers' job satisfaction and long-term career stability.

6.2.3. Establish Feedback Mechanisms and Support Systems

To further support faculty members and maintain high levels of job satisfaction, universities should establish regular feedback mechanisms, such as satisfaction surveys or focus group discussions, to better understand teachers' needs and concerns. These surveys should be conducted periodically to gather real-time feedback from faculty members, enabling administrators to address emerging issues promptly. By actively listening to teachers' perspectives and adjusting human resource strategies accordingly, universities can demonstrate their commitment to meeting the needs of their faculty. Additionally, universities should provide psychological support services to help teachers cope with stress and burnout. Offering professional development programs and mental health support can enhance teachers' well-being, motivate them to stay in academia, and improve their overall job satisfaction.

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the significance of both the work environment and workload in shaping teachers' job satisfaction. Higher education institutions ought to focus on fostering a supportive work atmosphere while tackling workload challenges to ensure that academic staff feel appreciated and content in their positions. By adopting the suggestions detailed earlier, university administrators can significantly boost job satisfaction, enhance faculty retention, and cultivate a more efficient and cohesive educational setting. These initiatives will not only advantage individual educators but also bolster the overall success and standing of the institution.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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