



## The Impact of Work Stress on Turnover Intention among Teachers in Vocational Undergraduate Colleges in Guangdong Province

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### Abstract

This study aims to explore the impact of work stress on turnover intention among teachers in vocational undergraduate colleges in Guangdong Province. Based on social exchange theory and JDC model, this study adopts quantitative research methods, distributes and collects survey questionnaires through the "Questionnaire Star" platform, and uses SPSS 29.0 to perform descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and linear regression analysis on the data. The results show that there is a significant positive correlation between work stress and turnover intention. In addition, among the four dimensions of work stress (workload, scientific research, interpersonal relationships, and career development), career development has the greatest impact on teachers' turnover intention. Finally, this study provides countermeasures and suggestions for alleviating teachers' work stress and enhancing the stability of the teaching staff.

**Keywords:** Vocational Undergraduate Colleges, Work Stress, Turnover Intention, Teachers

### Introduction

To build a "strong country in education", 16 new vocational undergraduate colleges will be added in 2024 (Ministry of Education, 2024). With the development of vocational undergraduate colleges in China, work stress of college teachers continues to emerge, in terms of scientific research stress, workload and teaching (Mycos, 2023). These stresses further lead to an increase in teachers' turnover intention, affecting the stability and sustainable development of the college's faculty (Salama et al., 2022).

As a higher level of education, the development of higher vocational colleges requires the support of a stable teaching staff. However, with the increase in teachers' work stress, the phenomenon of teachers leaving their jobs is serious. Therefore, this study takes teachers from higher vocational colleges in Guangdong Province as the research



object to explore the relationship between work stress and turnover intention, which is of great significance to building a stable teaching staff and is also the key to promoting the high-quality development of higher vocational education.

## Objectives

This study focuses on teachers in vocational colleges in Guangdong Province and proposes the objective to explore and analyze the relationship between turnover intention and teachers' work stress.

## Concept Theory Framework

### Teacher's work stress

Teachers' work stress refers to various negative emotions caused by teachers due to work environment factors (Naghieh et al., 2015), which come from workload, interpersonal relationships, time management, and career development (Agyapong et al., 2022). The biggest factor is scientific research, followed by personal development (Li, 2021).

This study identified the dimensions of work stress as workload, scientific research, interpersonal relationships, and career development.

### Turnover intention

Turnover intention is the psychological state of an employee planning to leave his current position (Park & Min, 2020). It is also the strongest predictor of actual resignation behavior (Asri, 2022).

### Research theory

This research encompasses Job Demand-Control Theory and social exchange theory.

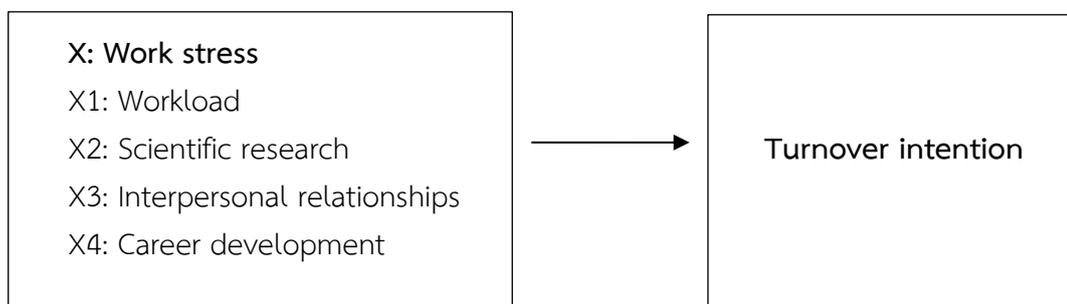
Social Exchange Theory believes that people will balance costs and rewards to pursue maximum benefits (Kieserling, 2018). When work stress increases and rewards are insufficient, they will have turnover intention (Shah et al., 2022).

Job Demand-Control Theory (JDC model) believes that work stress is jointly determined by job demands (such as load) and job control (such as autonomy) (Karasek, 1979). The combination of high job demands, and low job control will lead to high stress, which in turn increases employees' turnover intention (Shin & Hur, 2021).



## Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

This study is constructed in combination with the research directions as follows:



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework

Based on the above framework, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Teachers' work stress has a significant impact on their turnover intention.

H2: Teachers' workload stress has a significant impact on their turnover intention.

H3: Teachers' scientific research stress has a significant impact on their turnover intention.

H4: Teachers' interpersonal relationship stress has a significant impact on their turnover intention.

H5: Teachers' career development stress has a significant impact on their turnover intention.

## Materials and Methods

This study adopts a quantitative research method, with 6,239 teachers from four vocational undergraduate colleges in Guangdong Province as the research subjects. According to the sample size calculation method of Harcourt (2022), the sample size is determined to be 376 teachers. Combined with the Bourley proportional allocation formula used by Idoko and Andrew (2022), the sample is allocated to each college. This study uses a questionnaire survey method. The questionnaire is divided into three parts: the first part collects demographic information (such as gender, age, etc.). The second and third parts use the Likert five-level scale to measure work stress (workload, scientific research, interpersonal relationships, and career development) and turnover intention, from "5" for "strongly agree" to "1" for "strongly disagree". The questionnaire has been evaluated and pre-tested by IOC. The results showed that the average IOC score was 0.88, Cronbach's alpha was 0.895, KMO was 0.825, significance was <0.001, and reliability and



validity were good. The data were collected through the “Questionnaire Star” platform, and a total of 470 questionnaires were distributed under the premise of a 20% non-response rate (Althubaiti,2 023). After sorting, 432 valid questionnaires were obtained, and descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and linear regression analysis were performed using SPSS29.0. The analysis results are described in the next section.

## Results

**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics for demographic information

Item	Options	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	243	56.25
	Female	189	43.75
Age	30 years and below	66	15.28
	31-40 years old	164	37.96
	41-50 years old	135	31.25
	51 years and above	67	15.51
Education level	Undergraduate and below	48	11.11
	Master's degree	271	62.73
	PhD Candidates	113	26.16
Years of working experience	5 years and below	99	22.92
	6-10 years	159	36.81
	11-15 years	124	28.70
	16 years and above	50	11.57
Professional title level	Entry level teacher	120	27.78
	Junior professional title	167	38.66
	Intermediate professional title	95	21.99
Monthly compensation	Senior professional title	50	11.57
	5000 yuan and below	61	14.12
	5001-7000 Yuan	143	33.10
	7001-9000 Yuan	184	42.59
	9001 and above	44	10.19
	Total	432	100.0



Among the respondents, males accounted for 56.25% (243) and females accounted for 43.75% (189). The age distribution was 31-40 years old (37.36%, 164), followed by 41-50 years old (31.25%, 135), 51 years and above (15.51%, 67) and 30 years and below (15.28%, 66). The education level was mostly master's degree (62.73%, 271), followed by Ph.D. (26.16%, 113) and Undergraduate and below (11.11%, 48). Years of working experience were 6-10 years (36.81%, 159), followed by 11-15 years (28.70%, 124), 5 years and below (22.92%, 99) and 16 years and above (11.57%, 50). Professional title level is Junior professional title (38.66%, 167) and Entry level teacher (27.78%, 120), Intermediate professional title accounts for 21.99% (95), Senior professional title accounts for 11.57% (50). Monthly compensation is 7001-9000 Yuan (42.59%, 184), followed by monthly compensation of 5001-7000 Yuan (33.10%, 143), 5000 yuan and below (14.12%, 61) and 9001 and above (10.19%, 44).

### Descriptive statistical analysis of variables

**Table 2:** Descriptive analysis results of relevant variables

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation
X: Work stress	3.475	0.699
X1: Workload	3.511	0.916
X2: Scientific research	3.475	0.944
X3: Interpersonal relationship	3.484	0.936
X4: Career development	3.431	0.94
Y: Turnover intention	3.326	0.579

According to this research, teachers feel stress in various aspects, and most teachers have the idea of leaving their current jobs to find other jobs.

### Correlation analysis on work stress and turnover intention

**Table 3:** Correlation analysis results

	Work stress	Workload	Scientific research	Interpersonal relationships	Career development	Turnover intention
Work stress	1					
Workload	0.751**	1				
Scientific research	0.763**	0.442**	1			
Interpersonal relationships	0.727**	0.408**	0.382**	1		
Career development	0.755**	0.411**	0.456**	0.388**	1	
Turnover intention	0.599**	0.426**	0.460**	0.441**	0.466**	1

\*\* significant at the 0.01 level.



It was found that teachers' work stress and its various dimensions (workload, scientific research, interpersonal relationships, and career development) were significantly positively correlated with turnover intention ( $p < 0.01$ ), with the correlation coefficient of work stress being 0.599, and the correlation coefficients of the various dimensions being 0.426, 0.460, 0.441, and 0.466, respectively. This indicates that the greater the work stress, the stronger the teacher's turnover intention. It also indicates that high work stress, workload, scientific research stress, challenges in interpersonal relationships, and career development difficulties will increase teachers' turnover intention. Therefore, under the combined effects of various stressors, teachers' turnover intention continues to increase.

### Regression analysis on work stress and turnover intention

**Table 4:** Regression analysis results

	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficient	t	Significance (p)	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Standard Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
Constant	1.607	0.114	-	14.122	< 0.001	-	-
Workload	0.099	0.029	0.156	3.385	< 0.001	0.707	1.414
Scientific research	0.127	0.029	0.207	4.452	< 0.001	0.693	1.444
Interpersonal relationships	0.130	0.028	0.210	4.706	< 0.001	0.752	1.330
Career development	0.139	0.028	0.226	4.918	< 0.001	0.709	1.411

$R^2=0.360$ , Adjusted  $R^2=0.354$ ,  $F=59.973$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $D-W=2.022$

Notes: Independent variables: Workload, scientific research, interpersonal relationships, career development. Dependent variable: turnover intention

It was found that workload, scientific research, interpersonal relationships, and career development had a significant positive impact on teachers' turnover intention, among which career development stress had the greatest impact. Among them, the four factors can explain 36% of the variation in turnover intention ( $R^2 = 0.360$ ). Since  $F = 59.973$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $D-W = 2.022$ , this research result shows that the results are dependable.

### Conclusions and Discussion

This study examines the relationship between work stress and turnover intention among faculty members at vocational undergraduate colleges in Guangdong Province, and found that the four dimensions of workload, scientific research, interpersonal relationships, and career development were all significantly positively correlated with turnover intention, which is consistent with previous studies. For example, Wang and Li (2017) pointed out



that high work stress can lead to physical and mental exhaustion, leading to an increase in turnover intention; Jayasri and Annisa (2023) found that increased workload can lead to anxiety, thereby increasing turnover intention; Yao et al. (2023) showed that the high intensity and high requirements of scientific research tasks can aggravate teachers' fatigue and further increase turnover intention. Akhlaghimofrad and Farmanesh (2021) also showed that tension in interpersonal relationships can reduce work belonging and increase turnover intention. Among them, career development stress has the greatest impact on turnover intention (Zhu et al., 2021), because it is related to teachers' long-term career goals and value realization.

First, excessive workloads can cause teachers to be physically and mentally exhausted, which in turn affects their personal health. Second, scientific research stress challenges teachers to allocate their personal time, while also facing the stress of high-demand output. Third, tension in interpersonal relationships can reduce teachers' job satisfaction and affect their emotions. Finally, limited career development makes teachers lack confidence in the future. Therefore, under the combined effect of these factors, teachers are prone to turnover intention.

The results of this study are consistent with the social exchange theory, that is, when teachers' input and output are out of balance, job satisfaction decreases and turnover intention increases (such as "unclear career planning" with a mean of 3.41 and "unsatisfactory relationship with leaders" with a mean of 3.52). In addition, the results are consistent with the JDC model, and the combination of high job demands, and low job control produces high stress. Teachers face high demands in terms of workload (mean score of "high role demands" is 3.55) and scientific research (mean score of "lack of time" is 3.51), but lack a sense of control in terms of career development (mean score of "limited training opportunities" is 3.46) and interpersonal relationships (mean score of "challenging in teamwork" is 3.45). This imbalance exacerbates turnover intention (such as "browsing recruitment information" means 3.60, "considering leaving" means 3.52).

Therefore, this study verifies the impact of work stress on teachers' turnover intention and puts forward the following suggestions: First, colleges should conduct regular stress surveys, improve the assessment and training system, and optimize the working environment and communication mechanism; second, teachers need to continuously improve their professional abilities, learn to relax their emotions, and maintain a balance between work and life.

The main results of this study are: first, a "relationship scale between work stress and turnover intention of teachers in vocational undergraduate colleges" was developed



and passed the IOC test and pre-test; second, the relationship between work stress and turnover intention of teachers in vocational undergraduate colleges was clarified, and it was found that career development is the most important factor affecting turnover intention; third, based on the research conclusions, targeted suggestions for teacher management were put forward.

However, the study also has some limitations: first, the scope of questionnaire distribution is limited and only conducted through the online platform, which makes it difficult to screen qualified participants, which may affect the accuracy of the data; second, with the development of society, college teachers face new challenges, and the scale needs to be further optimized to meet the needs of teachers in different colleges and majors.

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