



Factors Affecting Job Burnout among Teachers in China: A Comprehensive Review

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ABSTRACT

The antecedents and outcomes of teacher burnout have increasingly attracted the attention of both Chinese and international researchers in recent years. In the Chinese education system, burnout becomes a serious issue for a large workgroup of 18.9 million teachers. However, there has been no comprehensive review to synthesize the literature in this area, limiting our understanding on how burnout is experienced in this specific cultural context. This study adopts the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model as its theoretical framework and conducts a systematic literature review of 75 studies published since 2021 on teacher burnout in China. We review on the job demands, job resources, and personal resources as the antecedents of burnout, and also on the outcomes of burnout. Our review indicates that teachers in China experience unique job demands because of specific cultural context. Moreover, we summarize how motivation contribute to the mechanism of burnout development among Chinese teachers. Third, drawing from the recent extension of the JD-R model, we suggest future avenues for teacher burnout research in China, including examining job demands, job resources, and personal resources under specific cultural context and education types, further investigating the role of motivation in the JD-R model, and conducting more intervention studies to mitigate teacher burnout.

Keywords: Teacher burnout; JD-R model; Antecedents; Outcomes; Motivation; China

INTRODUCTION

Among high-pressure professions, education stands out as particularly vulnerable due to its unique combination of emotional, cognitive, and physical demands (Garcia-Arroyo et al., 2019; Ji & Yue, 2020; D. Liu & Du, 2024). The burnout experience of teachers has received international research attention because multifaceted demands create a high-pressure environment, making teachers more susceptible to burnout compared to professionals in many other fields (Fathi et al., 2021; Ouellette et al., 2018). Teacher burnout significantly undermines teachers' well-being, manifesting in reduced self-rated health, poor mental health, and diminished job satisfaction (Aldrup et al., 2018; Bianchi et al., 2018; Herman et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2019; Salmela-Aro et al., 2019).

Given its close link to employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover rates, and job performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), burnout becomes a critical concern for researchers and practitioners in organizational management. Many methods to prevent or lessen teacher burnout have been proposed. These include giving teachers with more resources and aid, reducing their burden, increasing their pay, and facilitating professional growth (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Stankevičiūtė & Savanevičienė, 2021). Defined by Freudenberger (1974) as a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion due to prolonged workplace stressors, burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and reduced personal accomplishment (PA) (Maslach, 2018).

The escalating concern over teacher burnout has spurred growing attention toward understanding its causes and consequences (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). According to the job demands and resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001), Past and contemporary research on teacher burnout has made significant strides, utilizing well-established theoretical models such as the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R)



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framework and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to identify causes, consequences, and potential interventions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Geng et al., 2024; Lesener et al., 2019; McAnally & Hagger, 2024; L. Xu, 2019). These studies highlight that burnout is typically driven by an imbalance between high job demands and limited resources, further exacerbated by insufficient personal and organizational support. Notably, apart from demands and resources, recent literature explores the role of motivation in burnout process, and attempts to integrate it into the JD-R model to increase its predictive power (Roohani & Dayeri, 2019; Sato et al., 2022a).

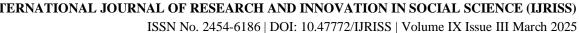
Although literature have shown that teachers across the globe share some common factors in their burnout development, recent research argues that different educational and cultural conditions cultivate distinct work and personal characteristics and contribute to varied burnout experiences. Teachers in China is one of the largest teacher groups in the world, with a teaching workforce of approximately 18.9 million (Ministry of Education of People's Republic of China, 2023), and this group is facing extremely high level of burnout. García-Arroyo (2019) comparative study revealed that Chinese teachers reported the second-highest scores on emotional exhaustion among educators in 35 countries, underscoring the intense psychological strain within the profession. Cheng et al. (2023) explicitly identified teaching as one of the most burnout-prone occupations in China, raising significant concerns about the sustainability of the educational workforce. The Institute of Psychology, Chinese Academy of Sciences (2023) has released a groundbreaking report on national mental health development (2021-2022), which revealed a particularly vulnerable demographic: professionals, with teachers standing out as a critical group of concern (Institute of Psychology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, 2023). The global comparison conducted by Persson (2017) underscores that Chinese university teachers experience the highest levels of stress among their global counterparts, with stress levels peaking at 5 on a scale where most countries fall below 3. The situation is particularly dire in higher vocational colleges, which constitute a significant segment of China's higher education system. As shown by the recent research results, higher vocational educators report that the degree of burnout is higher than that of University Teachers (Yaqian et al., 2024). However, the burnout of this group has not been systematically concerned and solved.

China's cultural context, social and educational conditions add specific demands to this group and contribute to shape a unique burnout profile of Chinese teachers. Confucian beliefs, the traditional Chinese education philosophy, expects teachers to be not only knowledge providers, but also role models, authority figures, or even parents to the students (H. Cheng et al., 2023). Such a high and sometimes unrealistic expectation makes teachers vulnerable to burnout (Luk et al., 2010). In recent years, China's education reforms have focused on enhancing educational quality and equity, placing higher demands on teachers' professional competencies and intensified pressures related to teaching evaluations and career development. Given the profound impact of teacher burnout and the distinct characteristics of burnout among Chinese teachers, conducting a comprehensive integrative review is imperative. Such a review would facilitate the development of a holistic framework for understanding teacher burnout in China while offering valuable insights for international research, particularly in countries with comparable educational contexts.

Objectives

This review synthesizes findings from recent literature to:

- i. Provide a comprehensive understanding of antecedences and outcomes of burnout in the Chinese higher educational teacher group through the lens of the job demands and resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001). Specifically, we focus on teachers' job demands, job resources, personal resources, and outcomes of burnout under the Chinese context.
- ii. Review on the role of teacher motivation, one of the individual cognitive and behavioral strategies, in explaining the burnout process among Chinese teachers. We summarize how teacher motivation contributes to the mechanism of burnout development.
- iii. Drawing from the recent extension of the JD-R model, we suggest future avenues for teacher burnout research in China.



LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher Burnout

Burnout has been defined as a three-dimensional construct in the predominant research literature (H. Cheng et al., 2023). Initially, it is characterized as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment among workers working in the human service and interreacting extensively with people (teachers, nurses, etc.) (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Later, burnout was expanded beyond the human service professions, with its three dimensions relabeled in broader terms: exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy (Maslach et al., 2001). Exhaustion refers to feelings of being over extended and depleted of one's emotional and physical resources. The cynicism (or depersonalization) has been described as a detached response to one's work and a cynical attitude toward other people at work. Finally, reduced professional efficacy refers to a decline in one's feelings of competence and effectiveness in work (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). This definition has been widely accepted in the burnout literature, and is commonly cited in recent research works (Bianchi et al., 2019; Demerouti, 2015; Maslach, 2017).

Researchers began exploring the presence and impact of burnout in education, counseling, law enforcement, finance, information technology, and various other industries (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Studies have shown that individuals facing prolonged high-pressure work, both in direct interpersonal interactions and in roles with indirect relationships to their work objects, are susceptible to experiencing burnout symptoms. Burnout among teachers and educators has been extensively studied. Research has explored the relationship between burnout and factors such as workload, classroom environment, job satisfaction, and student outcomes (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). In the context of this study, teacher burnout can be defined as a phenomenon or state that teachers experience high levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, and then exhibit significant symptoms of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). This definition and model have become crucial for studying and diagnosing teacher burnout and have been widely accepted and referenced.

The existing research studies have contributed significantly to the understanding of burnout and its underlying factors. These studies highlight the multidimensional nature of burnout and its complex interaction with individual, organizational, and contextual factors. In summary, burnout research originated with Freudenberger's work, initially focusing on social work and humanitarian fields. Subsequently, research expanded to other professional domains, personal life, family domains, and the field of organizational management. Burnout research encompasses the conceptualization, dimensions, influencing factors, and preventive and intervention approaches. These investigations are essential for understanding and addressing burnout issues and improving work and life quality (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001).

The JD-R model

The Job Demand-Resource Model (JD-R) focuses on employees' emotional experiences in the workplace. Taking the job itself as the logical starting point, it examines the interaction process between employees and their work. JD-R originated in the fields of occupational health, work stress, and job burnout research. It was developed based on the Job Demand-Control model and the Effort-Reward Imbalance model. Demerouti et al. (2001) enriched job-related factors and proposed the JD-R model. This theory posits that every occupation contains unique stress-related factors, which can be categorized into two dimensions: job demands and job resources.

Job demands refer to physical, psychological, social, and organizational aspects of a job that require sustained physical and mental effort or costs. While job demands are not necessarily negative, when they are excessively high, they can lead to negative emotions such as disappointment, anxiety, and burnout. Job resources, on the other hand, are those aspects that help reduce the physical and psychological costs associated with job demands, achieve work goals, and promote individual learning, development, and growth. According to the JD-R model, job demands induce emotional exhaustion, whereas a lack of job resources leads directly to disengagement. These two negative emotional experiences can, in turn, weaken positive outcome variables such as job performance and job satisfaction.



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With the rise of positive psychology, employees' positive emotions and psychological experiences at work have become a focal point. Schaufeli & Bakker (2004a) refined the model proposed by Demerouti et al., introducing the concept of engagement—which reflects the degree of alignment between employees' selves and their work roles—into the JD-R model (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004b). This inclusion highlighted the positive impact of job resources on engagement (work involvement).

A multitude of empirical findings indicate that human behavior is determined not only by situational factors but also by personal factors, resulting from the interaction between individuals and their environment. Consequently, an increasing number of researchers advocate for the integration of personal resources into the JD-R model to enhance its explanatory power. Given that personal resources are a higher-order concept, they are often operationalized as different variables in existing empirical studies. Researchers employ various methodologies (cross-sectional, longitudinal, diary studies) and examine diverse populations (teachers, nurses, firefighters, students, etc.) from multiple perspectives (main effects, mediation effects, moderation effects) to investigate the mechanisms through which personal resources exert their influence, yielding substantial findings.

From the continuously refined JD-R research framework, this study examines the impact of both work-related factors and personal factors on burnout. Therefore, the JD-R model is used as the underpinning theory for this research. We synthesize our findings on teacher burnout in China according to the JD-R model. Specifically, we focus on teachers' job demands, job resources, personal resources, and outcomes of burnout under the Chinese context. Additionally, it examines the role of personal factors, specifically teacher motivation, as a mediating variable in the relationship between these influencing factors and teacher burnout.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Teacher motivation plays a crucial role in influencing burnout levels among educators. High motivation, particularly intrinsic motivation, is often associated with reduced burnout, as it enhances teachers' sense of purpose, satisfaction, and resilience when facing challenges (Abós et al., 2018; Alexander et al., 2020). Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000b) is arguably the most frequently used theoretical framework in motivation research including teacher motivation (Richardson & Watt, 2018; Urdan, 2014). The theory provides a broad framework for understanding how people are intrinsically and extrinsically motivated, or not motivated, to take an action (Sato et al., 2022b).

Extensive research in developed countries has consistently highlighted the importance of teacher motivation in mitigating burnout. Studies have demonstrated that intrinsic motivation, supported by favorable work environments, protects against burnout (Abós et al., 2018; Alexander et al., 2020; Aliazas et al., 2023; Caruso, 2019). These findings underscore the critical role of motivation in reducing stress and improving job satisfaction. However, most of this research focuses on specific groups of teachers, such as English teachers or those in primary and secondary schools, leaving a significant gap in understanding motivation and burnout among higher vocational educators, particularly in China.

Moreover, emerging research has begun exploring teacher motivation as a mediating factor in burnout. For instance, studies have shown that motivation can mediate the relationship between job demands, job resources, and burnout, highlighting its potential to buffer against stress and enhance resilience (Chambel et al., 2015; Rubino et al., 2009; Zewude & Hercz, 2022). Despite these advancements, there remains a paucity of research integrating motivation as a mediator in the context of Chinese education.

As conceptualized within the SDT framework, motivation provides a nuanced perspective on the interplay between job demands, resources, and individual outcomes. Broadening this research to include Chinese teachers could illuminate new pathways for intervention, addressing the unique challenges faced by this critical segment of the teaching workforce. SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000b) has two strengths in explaining people's motivation. First, the theory categorizes motivation into three broad types: amotivation, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation. Further, SDT argues that people's motivation is a developmental process across time and place. Furthermore, SDT emphasizes that three basic psychological needs—a need for competence, a need for autonomy and a need for relatedness—are the nutriments of motivation (Deci, 1991).



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Thus, as SDT not only concerns the type of motivation, but also the circumstances that promote and maintain motivation, it would be an appropriate framework for examining lecturers' motivation.

Ryan and Deci proposed two primary types of motivation: autonomous motivation and controlled motivation. Autonomous motivation encompasses motivations that involve a sense of volition, willingness, and choice when engaging in activities. It includes intrinsic motivation as well as the integrated and identified forms of extrinsic motivation. Controlled motivation involves engaging in activities due to external pressures or obligations, or internal psychological compulsion. This category includes external regulation and introjected regulation. These distinctions help elucidate how different motivations influence behavior and the degree of self-determination experienced by individuals. The self-determination theory, from an organic perspective, assumes that every individual has an innate, intrinsic, and constructive consciousness of perfecting and integrating themselves, and a tendency to become a whole with others or the surrounding society. However, this innate tendency does not automatically take effect, but requires sustained support from the social environment to effectively function.

METHODOLOGY OF THE REVIEW

This review employs a systematic and rigorous methodology to synthesize existing literature on teacher burnout in the Chinese context. The approach integrates comprehensive database searches, strict inclusion criteria, and thematic categorization to ensure depth and reliability in findings.

Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted across three major academic databases: Web of Science, Google Scholar and China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI). Boolean operators and specific keywords, such as "teacher," "(professional) burnout," "job Stress," "Chinese teacher, " "university or college," "vocational teacher," and "China," were utilized to maximize relevant article retrieval. The search targeted peer-reviewed journal articles published from 2021 onward to focus on recent and relevant findings. Additional sources were identified through manual searches of references cited in key articles.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria encompassed studies that:

- I. Focus on empirical or comprehensive theoretical research on the correlates of Chinese teacher burnout.
- II. Explore personal, work-related, or scenario related factors influencing teacher burnout.
- III. The research subjects were full-time teachers in primary, secondary school, and/or vocational/college/university settings.
- IV. The studies were reported in English or Chinese language.

Studies were excluded if they:

- I. Concentrated exclusively on burnout in non-teaching staff such as principles, and in early education or special education.
- II. Lacked empirical rigor or theoretical relevance.
- III. Were inaccessible or published in languages other than English.

Screening and Categorization

The initial database search yielded 6100 articles. After screening titles and abstracts for relevance, 236 articles underwent full-text review, resulting in a final selection of 75 articles. A breakdown of the articles sourced from each database is provided in Table 1 below. These were categorized into three thematic areas: reviews of teacher





burnout, the antecedents and consequences of teacher burnout, as shown in Table 2. Among them, the research on the influencing factors of teacher burnout is the most extensive, reaching 71 articles.

Table 1 Articles Sourced from Databases

Database	Highly relevant Articles	Articles Included
Google Scholar	116	42
Web of Science	73	22
CNKI (Peking University Core Journals)	47	11
Total	236	75

From the perspective of the research subjects of these articles, 31 samples on primary and/or secondary level teacher burnout, 17 on Chinese EFL teacher burnout, 18 on college and university level teacher burnout, 3 on vocational teacher burnout, and 5 pieces on teacher burnout in an unspecified level (see details in Figure 0).

Generally, the reviewed empirical studies used cross-sectional designs and self-report questionnaires. It is notable that except for 5 longitudinal studies, the other 70 articles applied one-shot designs, which did not allow inference of a causal relationship. Sample sizes varied across the 75 studies from N = 122 to N = 7,979. With 14 exceptions of large sample size (N > 1,000), all studies employed small and/or convenient samples (see details in Table 3).

Table 2 Thematic areas of Articles

NO.	Thematic area	Studies	Total
1	Review of teacher burnout	Zheng (2022a); Y. Cheng (2022); Xing (2022); H. Cheng et al. (2023); X. Wang (2023); Q. Chen & Li (2024); B. Cao et al. (2024);	7
2	Antecedents of teacher burnout	W. J. Chen (2021); J. Ding & Xie (2021); F. Liu et al. (2021); Kwok Tsang et al. (2021); Lian et al. (2021); J. Tian et al. (2021); Lei et al. (2021); Xiaoshuang Zhu et al. (2021); Z. Xu & Yang (2021); C. Sun et al. (2022); Wei & Ye (2022); Yang et al. (2022); Bing et al. (2022); Pong (2022); Tsang, Wang, et al. (2022); J. Ding & He (2022); P. Li et al. (2022); Xie et al. (2022); M. Chen et al. (2022); M. Song (2022a); Zang et al. (2022); J. Tian et al. (2022); Tsang, Du, et al. (2022); W. Chen et al. (2022); W. Zhao et al. (2022); Zheng (2022b); Xing (2022); Lin et al. (2022); X. Zhao et al. (2022); Y. Tian & Guo (2024); Y. Cheng (2022); J. Zhang et al. (2022); C. Y. Zhou et al. (2022); Zhen et al. (2023); GH. Wang et al. (2023); H. Cheng et al. (2023); J. Li et al. (2023); L. Xu et al. (2023); Liu Jiahong et al. (2023); Su & Jiang (2023); S. Li (2023); S. Chen (2023); S. Wang & Li (2023); W. Zhang et al. (2023); X. Wang (2023); Hu et al. (2023); Yin (2023); Zou Peiyun (2023); Sheng et al. (2024); B. Chen et al. (2024); W. Sun & Dapat (2024); B. Cao et al. (2024); Q. Chen & Li (2024); Y. Song et al. (2024); Ma & Liu (2024); D. Liu & Du (2024); F. Chen et al. (2024); J. Cao et al. (2024); Q. Zhang et al. (2024); Pei et al. (2024); An & Tao (2024); K. Li et al. (2024); S. Zhao et al. (2024); J. Chen et al. (2024); Hu Yingying et al. (2025); K. Zhou & Wang (2024); Zeng et al. (2024); Hu Yingying et al. (2025); K. Zhou & Wang (2025); N. Ding et al. (2025); X. Li & Huo (2025)	71



3	Outcomes of	F. Liu et al. (2021); R. Li et al. (2021); Q. Zhang et al. (2022); W. Chen et al.	10
	teacher	(2022); Yu et al. (2023); H. Cheng et al. (2023); Su & Jiang (2023); S. Zhao	
	burnout	et al. (2024); XM. Chen et al. (2024); Zhong et al. (2025)	

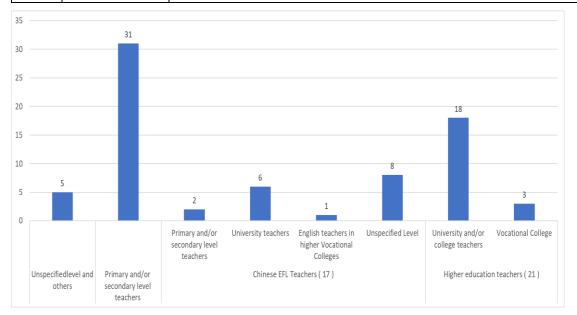


Figure 1 Statistical analysis of research subjects' data at different levels or types of 75 articles

Table 3 A review of teacher burnout research in China from 2021 onward (Empirical research N = 75)

No.	Author(s)	Research design	Research subjects	Time	Sample size	Location
1	CHEN WEN JIE (2021)	Quantitative	English Teachers in Higher Vocational Colleges	Cross section	151	Yunnan Province
2	Ding, J. L. & Xie, Z.C (2021)	Quantitative	Primary and secondary school teachers	Cross section	650	9 rural provinces
3	Fei Liu et al. (2021)	Quantitative	High School Teachers	Cross section	449	Jiangsu Province
4	Kwok Kuen Tsang et al. (2021)	Quantitative	Primary and Secondary school Teachers	Cross section	425	Nationwide
5	Ling Lian et al. (2021)	Quantitative	Young Chinese university teachers (under 39)	Cross section	447	Shanxi Province
6	Ruoxuan Li et al. (2021)	Quantitative		Cross section	1028	
7	Tian, J et al. (2021)	Quantitative	University teachers	Cross section	791	Beijing
8	Weihe Lei et al. (2021)	Quantitative	University teachers	Cross section	486	Nationwide
9	Xiaoshuang Zhu et al. (2021)	Quantitative	Chinese teachers from K-12 schools	Cross section	3312	Beijing
10	Zhihua Xu & Fu Yang (2021)	Quantitative	Unspecified Level	Cross section	351	



11	Changkang Sun et al. (2022)	Quantitative	Female primary, and secondary school teachers	Cross section	2220	Zhejiang Province
12	Changwu Wei & Jian- Hong Ye (2022)	Quantitative	College teacher	Cross section	586	Nationwide
13	Chunyan Yang et al. (2022)	Quantitative	Middle and high school teachers	Cross section	1711	Nationwide
14	Hang Bing et al. (2022)	Quantitative	Chinese EFL Teachers	Cross section	174	Nationwide
15	Hok-Ko Pong (2022)	Quantitative	Chinese secondary school teachers	Cross section	427	Hong Kong
16	Jie Ding and Li He (2022)	Quantitative	Chinese EFL teachers	Cross section	399	11 provinces
17	Kwok Kuen Tsang et al. (2022)	Quantitative	Primary and secondary school teachers	Cross section	322	Nationwide
18	Li Peng et al. (2022)	Quantitative	Primary and secondary school teachers	Cross section	362	Hebei &Tianjin
19	Meiling Song (2022)	Quantitative	Chinese EFL Teachers	Cross section	428	17 cities in 9 provinces
20	Min Chen et al. (2022)	Quantitative /Qualitative	Primary and secondary school teachers	Cross section	7,979	Nationwide
21	Min Xie et al. (2022)	Quantitative	Primary school teachers	Longitu dinal	3743/3 247	Beijing
22	Ning Zang et al. (2022)	Quantitative	Junior middle school teachers	Longitu dinal	701	Nationwide
23	Qun Zhang et al. (2022)	Quantitative	University faculty members	Cross section	296	Nationwide
24	Tian, J et al. (2022)	Quantitative	Elementary school teachers	Cross section	990	Beijing
25	Tsang, Kwok Kuen et al. (2022)	Quantitative	Primary and secondary teachers	Cross section	339	Beijing and Tianjin
26	Wei Chen et al. (2022)	Quantitative	Generalist teachers in rural primary schools	Cross section	639	Guangdong Province
27	Weiguo Zhao et al. (2022)	Quantitative	Primary and secondary school teachers	Cross section	558	Shandong Province
28	Xuan Zhao et al. (2022)	Quantitative	Primary and secondary school teachers	Cross section	2929	Zhejiang Province
29	Ye Tian & Y.G Guo (2022)	Quantitative	Primary and secondary school teachers	Cross section	539	Hunan Province
30	Yishan Lin et al. (2022)	Quantitative	Primary and secondary school teachers	Cross section	3147	Zhejiang Province
31	Yingli Cheng (2022)	Review	EFL teachers			



32	Yurong Zheng (2022)	Review	College English Teachers		I	T
33	Zhang JIa et al. (2022)	Quantitative	University teachers	Cross section	278	Henan Province
34	Zhaopeng Xing (2022)	Review	Chinese EFL teachers (Unspecified Level)			
35	Zhou Chunyan et al. (2022)	Quantitative	Primary and secondary school teachers	Cross section	414	A province in Central China
36	Baohua Zhen et al. (2023)	Quantitative	Primary and secondary school teachers	Cross section	751	Nationwide
37	Cheng Yu et al. (2023)	Quantitative	Vocational Colleges	Cross section	350	Yunnan Province
38	Guanghui Wang et al. (2023)	Quantitative	University teachers	Cross section	388	Nationwide
39	Han Cheng et al. (2023)	Review	Unspecified Level			
40	Jing Li et al. (2023)	Quantitative	Elementary and secondary school teachers	Cross section	380	Shandong Province
41	Lan Xu et al. (2023)	Quantitative	Unspecified Level	Cross section	7743	Nationwide
42	Liu Jiahong et al. (2023)	Quantitative	Primary and secondary school teachers	Cross section	1169	
43	Qiaolan Su & Man Jiang (2023)	Quantitative	Chinese female university teachers	Cross section	527	Nationwide
44	Shanshan Li (2023)	Quantitative	Chinese EFL teachers (Unspecified Level)	Cross section	638	Shandong Province
45	Shaoxian Wang & Zhongwu Li (2023)	Quantitative	Teachers In Higher Vocational Colleges	Cross section	350	Guangxi Province
46	Shuya Chen (2023)	Quantitative	English teachers	Cross section	428	Nationwide
47	Wanying Zhang et al. (2023)	Quantitative	Primary school teachers	Cross section	990	Beijing
48	Xiaoyu Wang (2023)	Review	Youth Teachers in Private University of Mainland China			
49	Yingying Hu et al. (2023)	Quantitative	Primary and secondary teachers	Longitu dinal	829	Nationwide
50	Yin, Weiwei (2023)	Quantitative	University teachers	Cross section	434	2 universities in Henan
51	Zou Peiyun (2023)	Qualitative	Young college teachers		76	8 developed provinces
52	Ang Sheng et al. (2024)	Quantitative	College Teachers	Cross section	122	Jiangsu Province



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53	Beibei Cao et al. (2024)	Review	College lecturers			
54	Bingyue Chen et al. (2024)	Qualitative	Teachers and students	Cross section	47	Nationwide
55	Dongxia Liu & Ruikang Du (2024)	Quantitative	Chinese EFL teachers (primary and secondary school teachers)	Cross section	387	Sichuan province
56	Fu Chen et al. (2024)	Quantitative	Chinese EFL teachers (colleges and universities)	Cross section	550	eight provinces
57	Jifeng Cao et al. (2024)	Quantitative	University teachers	Cross section	1239	15 universities
58	Jingjing Chen et al. (2024)	Quantitative	Chinese EFL teachers (diverse schools)	Cross section	400	7 provinces of China
59	KunZhan Li et al. (2024)	Quantitative	Higher education physical education teachers	Cross section	231	7 universities
60	Qiren Chen & Dr. Zhongwu Li (2024)	Review	Teachers In Higher Vocational Colleges			
61	Qinhan Zhang et al. (2024)	Quantitative	Primary and secondary school teachers	Cross section	3147	Zhejiang Province
62	Shangyong An & Sha Tao (2024)	Quantitative	Chinese EFL teachers (University teachers)	Cross section	403	30 cities in 12 provinces
63	Shuimei Pei et al. (2024)	Quantitative	University teachers	Cross section	7565	Nationwide
64	Siqi Zhao et al. (2024)	Quantitative	University teachers	Cross section	875	Nationwide
65	Tianyu Liu and Qiang Wang (2024)	Quantitative	Primary and secondary school teachers	Cross section	549	Beijing
66	Wei Sun & Rizal Dapat (2024)	Quantitative	Chinese EFL teachers (university)	Cross section	297	Nationwide
67	Xiu-Mei Chen et al. (2024)	Quantitative	Primary and secondary school teachers	Longitu dinal	927	Jiangxi Province
68	Yanhong Zeng et al. (2024)	Quantitative	high school EFL teachers	Cross section	802	Southern China
69	Yining Song et al. (2024)	Quantitative	Primary and secondary school teachers	Cross section	502	
70	Yuxia Ma & Z.Q. Liu (2024)	Quantitative	Chinese EFL teachers (colleges and universities)	Cross section	398	Nationwide
71	Hu Yingying et al. (2025)	Quantitative	Primary and secondary school teachers	Longitu dinal	829	Beijing, Chongqing, Guangdong, Henan, Gansu and Liaoning
72	Kun Zhou and Jin Wang (2025)	Quantitative /Qualitative	Young and middle-aged university lecturers	Cross section	449	Chongqing, Anhui, Beijing, and Hebei
73	Nan Ding et al. (2025)	Quantitative	Chinese EFL teachers (institutions,	Cross	341	Nationwide





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Ī				universities, and colleges)	section		
	74	Xintong Li et al. (2025)	Quantitative	Chinese music teachers	Cross section	315	Nationwide
	75	Yunhui Zhong et al. (2025)	Quantitative	Primary school teachers	Cross section	3199	15 cities across China

Note: EFL=English as a Foreign Language; EE = emotional exhaustion; DP = depersonalization; PA = reduced personal accomplishment

RESULTS

Previous studies highlight the multidimensional nature of burnout and its complex interaction with individual, organizational, and contextual factors. Next, we will review the antecedents and outcomes of teacher burnout, and focus on the variables such as motivation combined with the corresponding situation.

Antecedents of teacher burnout in China

Building on the JD-R model, we organize the antecedents of teacher burnout in China into three main categories: job demands, job resources, and personal resources. We discuss the varied predicting effects of those variables on teacher burnout.

Job demands

Based on an analysis of 75 articles, 31 studies have investigated the relationship of job demands and burnout, with 10 main job demands being identified and examined (see a full list in Table 4). Instead of discussing all the stressors that related to Chinese teacher burnout, we will focus on role stress which should be understood within the Chinese context and constitute a unique burnout profile of Chinese teachers.

Role stress is a particularly significant demand for teachers in China. The unique occupational challenges faced by Chinese teachers demand greater academic attention. Chinese teachers, especially higher vocational educators in China often juggle multifaceted roles involving teaching, research, administrative duties, and industry collaboration (C. Chen & Wang, 2020; Lei et al., 2021). The increasing demands of these roles and frequent policy and organizational changes exacerbate stress levels and the potential for burnout.

In order to understand and address the issues of burnout, it is essential to discover the critical predictors and gaps that contribute to this issue. One of the critical gaps in current literature is the limited exploration of role stress, a composite construct encompassing role ambiguity, conflict, and overload. While past studies have highlighted the significant impact of role stress on burnout (Azeem, 2013; Maor & Hemi, 2021; Richards et al., 2016; Washburn et al., 2021), Chinese research has yet to delve deeply into this area, especially within the context of higher vocational education. Existing studies predominantly focus on conflict among university teachers, overlooking the broader implications of role stress in the complex work environments of higher vocational institutions. Addressing this gap is crucial for developing effective interventions to mitigate burnout.

Job resources

Before 2020, Job resource examined in teacher burnout research in China is mostly limited to the social support that teachers can get, while other important resources (e.g. leadership, organizational Support, and management Cultures) have largely been ignored. Of the 75 articles reviewed, 21 studies have investigated the relationship of job resources and burnout, with more than 9 main job resources being identified and examined (see a full list in Table 5). This study will focus on discussing perceived organizational support.

Similarly, organizational factors such as perceived organizational support and person-organization fit are underresearched in the Chinese context. In collectivist cultures like China's, where relational networks and institutional support hold significant value, these factors may play pivotal roles in influencing teacher burnout.





While some studies have identified a negative relationship between organizational support and burnout (Anomneze et al., 2016; Rizvi et al., 2023; Yew & Ramos, 2019), findings remain ambiguous. For instance, Baptista & Cardoso (2021) reported only a weak correlation between these variables, while others found significant negative effects on specific dimensions of burnout, such as emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The ambiguous findings highlight the need for more robust empirical studies to clarify the role of organizational support in mitigating burnout among Chinese higher vocational teachers.

Table 4. Job stressors of teacher burnout in China.

NO.	Stressors	Studies
1	Teacher victimization	Yang et al. (2022)
2	job (role) stress	Z. Xu & Yang (2021); P. Li et al. (2022); W. Zhao et al. (2022); Zheng (2022b); J. Zhang et al. (2022); H. Cheng et al. (2023);L. Xu et al. (2023); Hu et al. (2023); Zou Peiyun (2023); Sheng et al. (2024); J. Cao et al. (2024); K. Li et al. (2024); Pei et al. (2024); W. Sun & Dapat (2024); Y. Song et al. (2024)
3	Teaching-research conflict	Lei et al. (2021); S. Zhao et al. (2024)
4	Workplace ostracism	GH. Wang et al. (2023)
5	Work–family conflict	W. Zhao et al. (2022); Su & Jiang (2023); S. Zhao et al. (2024)
6	Expression inhibition	Sheng et al. (2024)
7	Increased administrative Responsibilities	Q. Chen & Li (2024)
8	Changing curriculum	Q. Chen & Li (2024)
9	Time poverty	T. Liu & Wang (2024); Zeng et al. (2024)
10	Emotional Labor	Tsang et al. (2021); P. Li et al. (2022); Hu et al. (2023); Yin (2023)

Perceived organizational support refers to the extent to which employees subjectively perceive that the organization cares about, supports, and values them. This support can be manifested through the provision of resources, information, training, promotion opportunities, job flexibility, and other aspects (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Although there is a crisis of teachers feeling burned out and intending to leave the profession, organizational factors still make a difference. In particular, organizational support and satisfaction with school decisions were associated with greater personal satisfaction and reduced burnout (Trinidad, 2021). In a study on burnout among university teachers in Brazil, the results indicated symptoms of Burnout syndrome in teachers as well as greater predictive power of organizational support in the occurrence of the syndrome (Silva & Oliveira, 2019).

Research has found that compared with social factors and personal factors, organizational factors have the most influence on teacher burnout (Ji & Yue, 2020). Several interesting studies extends the previous studies by investigating the relationship of perceived organizational support towards teacher burnout such as Anomneze et





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al. (2016), Yew & Ramos (2019) and Rizvi et al. (2023). Anomneze et al. (2016) investigated the moderating role of perceived organizational support on emotional labor—burnout relation among 323 secondary school teachers in Enugu State, Nigeria. Results showed that POS significantly predicted emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, which are two of the three Structures of Burnout. One limitation of the study is the measurement of organizational support from only one dimension may have obscured the nuanced understanding of the impacts that different dimensions of organizational support would have had on burnout. Similarly, similar results have been validated in other studies. People report burnout in an environment where efforts are not appreciated, and workload is unjustly allocated, which creates burnout (Janssen, 2000). Teachers who enjoy organizational support tend to thrive at work, which distinctly manifests lesser chances of burnout than in the presence of organizational support (Doğru, 2018).

Table 5. Job resources of teacher burnout in China.

NO.	Antecedents	Studies
1	School Management Cultures	Tsang et al. (2021); Yang et al. (2022); Zheng (2022b)
2	Calling	Lian et al. (2021); X. Zhao et al. (2022); J. Li et al. (2023)
3	Transformational leadership	J. Tian et al. (2021); J. Tian et al. (2022); Tsang, Du, et al. (2022); Y. Tian & Guo (2024); X. Li & Huo (2025)
4	Perceived supervisory support	Lei et al. (2021); Zeng et al. (2024)
5	Perceived Organizational Support	Z. Xu & Yang (2021); Lin et al. (2022); Hu et al. (2023)
6	School information and communication technology (ICT) construction	M. Chen et al. (2022)
7	Social support	B. Cao et al. (2024); Y. Song et al. (2024)
8	Job satisfaction	J. Cao et al. (2024)
9	Spiritual leadership	J. Li et al. (2023)

Personal resources

Another promising and increasingly focused area is the role of personal resources, mainly psychological capital, self-efficacy, psychological empowerment and professional identity, in combating burnout. Among all 75 sampled articles, 14 types of personal resources were discussed and examined, indicating a growing focus on personal resources (see a full list in Table 6).

Past research has consistently demonstrated the protective effects of psychological capital comprising self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience against burnout (Burhanuddin et al., 2019; Cai, 2015; D. Liu & Du, 2024). Investigating the role of psychological capital could provide valuable insights into personal strategies for enhancing teacher resilience and reducing burnout. According to the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001), psychological capital can be used as an individual resource to help individuals regulate their job stress, thus alleviating their job burnout. Studies in the area of teacher burnout have been conclusive about the negative relationship between psychological capital and burnout (M. Demir & Demir, 2019; Ferradás et al., 2019; Y. Zhang et al., 2019), which suggests that psychological capital would be an effective personal resource for the reduction of these psychopathological states in teachers.

Some other studies have indicated that psychological capital may constitute a negative predictor of teacher burnout, acting as a mediator of variables, such as subjective wellbeing (Hansen et al., 2015), or emotional



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expression (Cheung et al., 2011). Similarly, other studies have concluded that the negative relationship between psychological capital and burnout would contribute to improved teacher performance and increased job satisfaction (S. Demir, 2018). In short, existing research suggests that psychological capital equips teachers with effective resources that are negatively related to the symptomatology associated with burnout (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced personal accomplishment).

Some research on the impact of psychological capital on teacher burnout is being conducted in China, such as Y. Zhang et al. (2019), X. Zhao et al. (2022), D. Liu & Du (2024), and Xue et al. (2023). These studies have proven that there is a significant negative correlation between psychological capital and teacher burnout, that is, the higher the psychological capital, the lower the teacher burnout.

Table 6. Personal resources of teacher burnout in China.

NO.	Antecedents	Studies
1	Psychological empowerment	J. Ding & Xie (2021); Tsang, Wang, et al. (2022); Tsang, Du, et al. (2022); Yang et al. (2022); Y. Song et al. (2024)
2	Professional identity	J. Ding & Xie (2021); Lian et al. (2021); C. Sun et al. (2022); Xie et al. (2022); Lin et al. (2022); Xing (2022); Q. Zhang et al. (2024)
3	Resilience	F. Liu et al. (2021); Lin et al. (2022); J. Zhang et al. (2022); S. Li (2023); Hu et al. (2023); N. Ding et al. (2025)
4	Motivation	W. J. Chen (2021); M. Song (2022a); Liu Jiahong et al. (2023)
5	Character strengths	Lian et al. (2021)
6	Teachers' Social- Emotional Competence	J. Tian et al. (2021); J. Tian et al. (2022); Liu Jiahong et al. (2023); W. Zhang et al. (2023)
7	Psychological capital	Lei et al. (2021); C. Sun et al. (2022); Xie et al. (2022); X. Zhao et al. (2022); S. Wang & Li (2023); Yin (2023); D. Liu & Du (2024); F. Chen et al. (2024); Q. Zhang et al. (2024); W. Sun & Dapat (2024)
8	self-efficacy	Bing et al. (2022); J. Ding & He (2022); M. Song (2022a); Y. Tian & Guo (2024); S. Li (2023); S. Chen (2023); J. Chen et al. (2024); An & Tao (2024); Pei et al. (2024); K. Zhou & Wang (2025)
9	Emotion regulation	Bing et al. (2022); S. Li (2023); Ma & Liu (2024)
10	Work engagement	C. Sun et al. (2022); X. Zhao et al. (2022); Lin et al. (2022); Xing (2022); B. Chen et al. (2024); Q. Zhang et al. (2024)
11	Teachers' Well-Being	J. Tian et al. (2021); Pong (2022); An & Tao (2024); Ma & Liu (2024); N. Ding et al. (2025)
12	Emotional intelligence	Y. Tian & Guo (2024); J. Li et al. (2023); J. Chen et al. (2024)
13	Perceptual behavior control	S. Wang & Li (2023)
14	Teacher information literacy	M. Chen et al. (2022)



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Teacher Motivation

Work motivation refers to a series of internal and external forces within an individual that initiate work-related behaviors and determine their form, direction, intensity, and duration (Pinder, 2014). Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000a) is arguably the most frequently used theoretical framework in motivation research including teacher motivation (Richardson & Watt, 2018; Urdan, 2014).

Ryan and Deci (2000), the founder of SDT, differentiates several types of motivation based on various goals or reasons that give rise to an act. Fernet et al. (2008), also based on SDT, define three broadly known motivations from low to high: amotivation, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation and psychometrically assess. Self-determined kinds of motivation have positive and negative consequences or outcomes. For example, intrinsic motivation and identified regulation result in positive effects, whereas external regulation, introjected regulation, and amotivation lead to negative results (Fernet et al., 2008). Additionally, intrinsic motivation enables individuals to develop internal psychological growth, integrate the personality, allow integration of psychological stability, and foster positive life processes (Ryan & Deci, 2000a), and the most positive determinants of a personal and higher level of well-being (Ryan et al., 2008).

Teacher motivation refers to reasons that emanating from individuals' intrinsic values to choose to teach and sustaining teaching, and the intensity of teacher motivation which is indicated by effort expended on teaching as influenced by a number of contextual factors. Early research on teacher motivation had common interests in initial teachers' motivation to choose teaching as a career. Only in recent years, research in in-service teachers' motivation to remain teaching has developed (Han & Yin, 2016). Sato et al. (2022b) examined the relationships between teacher motivation (TM) and perceived burnout of English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) teachers in Chile. The participants were 154 school-level teachers with a range of backgrounds (teaching experience, geographic areas, and school sectors). Structural equation modeling showed that TM negatively predicted perceived burnout, suggesting that it can counter teachers' emotional exhaustion and their perceived lack of personal accomplishment.

Several teacher motivation studies were conducted in China. For example, M. Song (2022a) analyzed the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy, motivation, and occupational burnout. The study found that both self-efficacy and motivation of teachers are predictive factors for teacher burnout. (M. Song, 2022b). Liu Jiahong et al. (2023) used a stratified random sampling method to select 378 teachers from 6 primary and secondary schools in Henan Province as the research subjects. The research examined the relationships between teacher's motivation to teach, (including two dimensions: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation), teacher's social emotional ability and teacher's sense of occupational burnout. This study found that the intrinsic motivation of teachers has a negative impact on their sense of occupational burnout, while the extrinsic motivation has a positive impact on their sense of occupational burnout. This study only examines the impact of teacher motivation on teacher burnout from the perspective of teaching motivation, and cannot extend to the perspective of the process of maintaining teacher career development (Liu Jiahong et al., 2023). T. Zhang (2021) provided a theoretical perspective that physical education teacher motivation is contextually constructed in close relation with their job demands and recourses. This study suggested that the teacher motivation is multidimensional and should not be simplified to a single reason or factor. Different teachers may be driven by different motivations, which can influence each other and collectively affect their professional behavior and attitudes. The author emphasized the interactive effects of situational factors (such as school environment, student reactions, administrative support, administrative overload etc.) and personal factors (such as teacher self-efficacy, resilience, values, professional identity, etc.) on teacher motivation.

Although many studies have been conducted in the past to examine the relationship between influencing factors and teacher motivation in China, the problem is that the extent to which these findings can be generalized to non-western work contexts is still under-explored. Most of the influencing factors and teacher motivation research have been conducted in the primary and secondary school teachers. Further research to investigate the relationship between influencing factors and teacher motivation should be conducted, particularly among higher education teachers, as they make up the largest group of teachers in China. Furthermore, there is still a lack of evidence regarding the motivational factors in China. Therefore, further research on studying the integration of



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factors influencing burnout at both individual and organizational levels in a single framework is essential and to understand the effects on teacher motivation.

Outcomes of teacher burnout in China

Studies concerning the outcomes associated with teacher burnout in China are relatively less than those on antecedents. Of the 75 articles reviewed, only 10 studies have investigated the outcomes of teacher burnout in China, involving turnover intention (R. Li et al., 2021; F. Liu et al., 2021; Pei et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2023; Q. Zhang et al., 2022; S. Zhao et al., 2024), teacher well-being (Wei & Ye, 2022), job Satisfaction (W. Chen et al., 2022; Su & Jiang, 2023), mental health (T. Liu & Wang, 2024), and depressive symptoms (Zhong et al., 2025), etc.

Directions for future research

JD-R model under specific cultural context

One of the unique aspects examined in this review is the culturally specific job demands under the Chinese context. Through our review, we can see that most of the researches on teacher burnout in China's educational context focus on primary and secondary school teachers and EFL teachers, and pay little attention to higher vocational teachers.

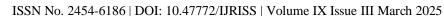
The development of vocational education in China has put forward new requirements for the construction of high-quality teacher teams. Vocational education combines the dual characteristics of higher education and vocational education. Based on the above new requirements, China's positioning of the standards for vocational teachers is "dual teacher quality + three abilities + five roles". The dual teacher quality refers to the fact that teachers should possess both the professional technical ability as technical personnel and the educational and teaching ability as teachers; The three abilities include the ability to integrate theory and practice in teaching, the ability to apply scientific research, and the ability to integrate industry and education with social services (L. Zhang et al., 2024). The five roles played by vocational college teachers are "implementers of professional teaching", "caregivers of student life", "leaders of professional practice", "developers of educational resources", and "leaders of self-development" (Z. Zhou et al., 2023). Role stress in the context of China's education system constitutes a critical issue that warrants significant academic attention.

The pressure of teachers' job roles and problems in the education system, especially at the organizational level, pose significant professional development challenges for vocational college teachers and trigger some personal issues. The 2023 National Survey Report on the Current Situation of Vocational Education Teachers (EDUCATOR, 2023) points out that full-time teachers in vocational colleges experience negative phenomena such as high occupational burnout, high emotional load, low efficacy, and low sense of autonomy due to objective factors such as high work pressure, limited learning opportunities, and excessive workload. Future research is needed to investigate the impact of factors related to individual and organizational environments, as well as the interaction between individuals and organizational environments, on burnout among Chinese higher vocational teachers.

The role of motivation in the JD-R model

Building on our review, we highlight motivation and behavioral strategy that can potentially be integrated into the JD-R model in burnout research of Chinese teachers. Our review shows that different motivation relate to job demands, job/personal resources, and burnout distinctively, leading to unique pathways toward burnout. However, we list motivation worth further researching instead of providing detailed pathway, because research in this field is still limited and generates inconclusive findings.

This study goes a step further by integrating two theories: Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) and Self Determination Theory (SDT), which can provide a more comprehensive perspective that helps us understand and address burnout. The JD-R model focuses on the needs and resources in the work environment, while the SDT theory emphasizes the satisfaction of basic psychological needs. Combining these two theories, this study could provide





an extensive understanding of how the work environment affects basic psychological needs and leads to burnout.

Research along this line is needed to test and clarify how teacher motivation can be integrated into the JD-R model. It is very important for the system to understand the factors that influence teacher burnout.

Thorough methodological procedure and effective intervention program

From our detailed examination of 75 articles, we can find that most of the studies are cross-sectional studies. In the field of research on teacher burnout in China, the existing literature predominantly employs cross-sectional study designs. While such approaches can reveal associations between different variables, they are limited in capturing the dynamic developmental process of teacher burnout and its causal mechanisms. Therefore, future studies should adopt longitudinal research designs to provide a more comprehensive examination of the trajectory of teacher burnout and its influencing factors.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive review on teacher burnout research in the Chinese context under the JD-R framework. It makes some contributions to the literature of teacher burnout and burnout research. Firstly, we reviewed integrated antecedents of teacher burnout in China based on empirically validated factors and their relationships. Specifically, we systematically identify the job demands, job/personal resources, and outcomes of teacher burnout in the Chinese context. We find that some job demands contributing to Chinese teacher burnout are culturally specific while some key resources are not adequately examined in this context, which suggests that a more contextualized analysis of burnout is worthwhile. Secondly, we discuss how motivation contributes to the burnout process in the Chinese teacher group. Specifically, we review on the role motivations play in the relationships between job demands, job/personal resources, and burnout. Thirdly, this review highlights the gaps in our understanding of teacher burnout research in China. Firstly, future works might examine how organizational factors influence the development of burnout. Secondly, researchers should explore the role of different motivation in Chinese teacher burnout under the JD-R framework. Thirdly, we notice the scarcity of rigorous research design such as longitudinal and diary study in teacher burnout field, and point out the need of intervention studies as a valuable practical application.

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