

A Research of Occupational Happiness of R Primary School Teachers based on Job demands, and Job resources of JD-R Model

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Abstract

Tutoring activities that were previously distributed to out-of-school training institutes have been shifted to the work of in-school instructors as part of China's "double reduction" program. As a result, teachers are under more stress than ever before, potentially affecting pupils' education. As a result, occupational satisfaction among teachers has now been considered a critical aspect of education. The JD-R model (Job Demand-Resources) discusses the factors influencing elementary school teachers' occupational happiness in the context of increasing job content and uneven distribution of educational resources to find effective ways to improve their occupational happiness. One hundred twenty-five staff samples were obtained from an R elementary school for the study. Result reveals that occupational, personal, organizational, and social aspects significantly affect teachers' occupational happiness.

Keywords: Occupational happiness; JD-R model; Elementary school teachers; Job demands; Job resources.

Introduction

Figures from China's Ministry of Education show that Yunnan Province ranks third in the country for the number of elementary schools, with 10,688 schools and 607,950 students enrolled in elementary schools as of 2021. Meanwhile, the number of elementary school teachers is ranked eleventh in the country at 237,317. The typical scenario of more students and fewer teachers exists in the primary education field in Yunnan Province. R Elementary School is a first-class model elementary school in Yunnan Province, with 3,982 students and 129 full-time teachers. The teacher-student ratio of 1:31 is much higher than the national standard of 1:20, showing an overload of teachers' workload.

The elementary school teachers' job requires them to take on multiple roles such as a knowledge transmitter, a life manager, a parental agent, and a psychological interventionist for students. Furthermore, the pressure of examination scores from high school has contributed to too much additional content in elementary education; the function of elementary education is exaggerated internally, with high social expectations, which largely influences teachers' working experience. R Elementary school suffers from a long-standing imbalance in the distribution of educational resources due to its location in the economically underdeveloped western region, resulting in a teaching load and workload of its teaching staff twice that of the developed eastern region. Starting from September 2021, all elementary and secondary schools in mainland China will begin to fully implement the "double reduction" policy, easing the burden of excessive homework and off-campus tutoring for students undergoing compulsory education. In such a policy, the previously dispersed tutoring duties to off-campus training institutions were shifted to teachers within the schools.

Besides the routine teaching duties and daily management, all teachers at R Elementary School are also required to undertake after-school services and student enrichment work. For example, student lunchtime meals, self-study sessions, and hobbies. Even though teachers must overcome personal and family constraints, they must devote a lot of time and energy to accomplish tasks other than teaching and extend their working hours significantly. However, teachers' efforts can be seen as unremunerated work instead of contributing. At the same time, internal systems such as geographical salary differences and job evaluation are relatively lagging, causing the value of teachers' labor to conform to their labor compensation, highlighting salary problems and stagnating personal development. The direct cause of the lack of occupational happiness among R elementary school teachers is the contradiction between the increasing demands of work, increasing pressure and the lack of work resources, and the urgent need to improve teachers' overall ability.

The study of occupational happiness originates from the category of positive psychology, where the perceived and measured dimensions of occupational well-being differ in different work contexts. Following China's elementary school curriculum reform, the importance of students' subjectivity has grown, placing greater expectations on teachers' skills

and work attitudes. First, as natural beings, elementary school teachers must obtain the necessary means of subsistence through the labor of the teaching occupation. Secondly, the more critical existence of teachers is the spiritual existence. The education process is when the educator internalizes the teaching materials and then acts on students in the form of external manifestations. Teachers are imparting knowledge to students while at the same time using their own internalized personal feelings and concepts to influence students implicitly (Wei and Gou 2021).

Research objective

The study adopts the JD-R model (job demand-resource model) to explore the increasing job content and uneven distribution of educational resources to find:

1. Factors affecting the occupational happiness of elementary school teachers
2. Effective ways to enhance teachers' occupational happiness.

Literature review

JD-R (Job Demands-Resources model)

JD-R (Job Demands-Resources) model provides the theoretical support for this study. The model was proposed by Demerouti et al. (2001), which divides job characteristics into two categories of job demands and job resources, as a model for exploring job characteristics and individual job stress and burnout.

The job demands place physical, psychological, social and organizational demands on the worker, which require both physical and psychological effort. Administrative support and job autonomy are the two fundamental features of job resources (Ma, Zhang, and Yang, 2020).

According to both positive and negative motivators in the JD-R model, increased job resources can attenuate and prevent occupational burnout, thereby promoting occupational satisfaction.

Accordingly, Figure 1 presents the JD-R framework for this study, which hypothesizes both job demands and resources as significant predictors of burnout.

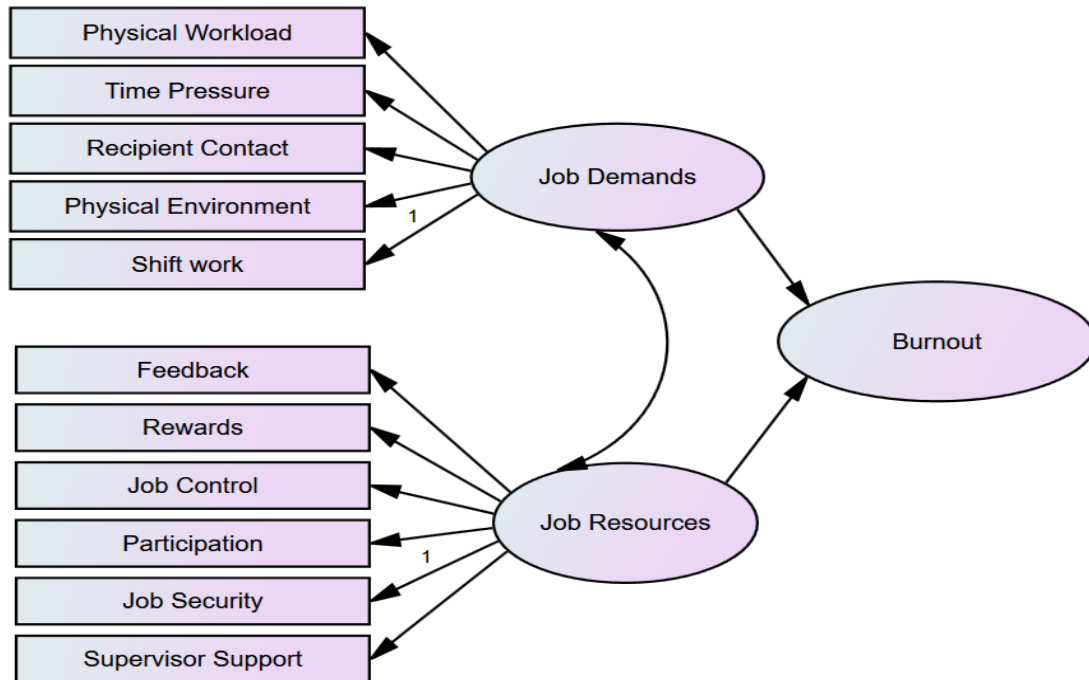


Fig. 1. JD-R Model

Dependent variable

Research on teachers' occupational happiness has been conducted for a long time in countries such as Finland and Spain. Klusmann et al. (2008) defines teachers' occupational happiness as the level of occupational depletion and job satisfaction. In addition, they consider the chronic stress dimension as a subjective feeling originating from the inner being, which requires harmony between mind and body and emphasizes the sense of balance and comfort that the dimensions of life have. Existing research suggests that administrators need to develop a deeper understanding of teachers' occupational-emotional trajectories to help them achieve greater levels of self-esteem. Administrators should also respect the emotional experience of individual teachers and strive to build a shared vision between teachers and the school to balance the inner abundance of teachers and the internal development of the school. (Jakonen and Evnitskaya 2020)

The studies in China that support the proceeding arguments have focused on groups of teachers who face the task of advancing to higher education, such as middle and high schools. Due to national and academic contexts, the Chinese research perspective generally agrees that teachers serve their students with test and promotion achievements, which is a requirement of teachers' professional responsibility and ethics and a reflection of respecting students' subject status.

The occupational happiness of elementary school teachers mainly refers to the cognitive satisfaction and the emotional experience that teachers gain from the professional activity of

teaching and educating others (Wu, 2012), which is also a state of existence. Teachers are free and autonomous in their teaching work to realize their teaching ideals and thus eventually attain physical and mental happiness (Rahm & Heise, 2019). Subjective happiness is determined by the size of the difference between an individual's expectations and fulfilment, so teachers must reasonably expect themselves at work. For teachers in elementary school, students are not under pressure for advancement, and the teacher's educational responsibilities are knowledge popularization and students' behavior development. Given this environment, the value of the teachers' profession is difficult to measure by students' test scores and promotion rates. Therefore, elementary school teachers' tension and occupational happiness are easily neglected. The Chinese scholars attribute the decay of elementary school teachers' occupational happiness to the heavy workload, the continuous increase in work demands, the long-term work in stressful situations, the constant fatigue at work, and the increased frustration caused by various conflicts and contradictions in relationship with others (Zhang, 2019).

Wu & Xu (2015) promoted "Evaluation Criteria for Professional Well-being of Primary School Teachers", which divided the measurement dimensions into cognitive-psychological and emotional. The book contains six indicators of career identity, proper positioning, economic income, social status, work status, and development prospects, which fit the job demands and job resources. The study employed a form of developmental goal evaluation to supplement the mentioned criteria in the context of R elementary school teachers to explore more comprehensive and more realistic factors influencing the occupational happiness of R schoolteachers.

Independent variables

Job demands

Xiong & Li (2020) considered that job demands are among the negative factors that deplete individuals' positive feelings and are considered an important variable to predict adverse work outcomes.

The job demands of elementary school teachers are divided into occupational and individual factors based on duties differences.

Occupational factors include student performance, teaching proficiency, and professional development. Among them, student performance refers to the external objective factors that students need to commit to fulfilling their learning tasks and their internal subjective feelings, such as their emotional experiences in learning (Tong 2014). The teaching standard is a careful consideration of the teacher's professional quality, which is achieved by the teacher's own subjective practical activities under the stimulation of the teacher's intrinsic motivation (Zhang and Huan 2016). At the level of career development, because elementary school teachers have a one-sided and single career plan, their salaries are low compared to other professions. Therefore, it is difficult for teachers to consider developing their internal professional values,

and they tend to neglect the improvement of professional knowledge and skills (Yang and Mi 2008).

Personal factors include self-esteem, stress tolerance and interpersonal relationships. Teachers' self-esteem mainly emphasizes self-awareness, career planning design, maintenance of a positive attitude and reasonable expectations; the performance reflects this value. The best state for teachers is to fulfil themselves by educating others and achieving the unity of social and personal values (Xie & Li, 2007). According to Rao (2010), high levels of emotional stress directly impact teachers' physical and mental health. She suggested that moderate pressure can be transformed into motivation and drive people to improve.

In contrast, excessive stress can lead to mental health problems and often lead to anxiety, depression, anger, or even loss of confidence in work. Teachers are expected to be able to rehabilitate themselves from negative emotions. As with all careers, good interpersonal relationships are essential for enhancing teachers' occupational happiness by making people feel positive, relieving stress, and promoting physical and mental health, thus mobilizing teachers towards their work. When teachers' interpersonal relationships are strained, it can distract from teaching and decline teaching quality (Gong et al., 2016).

Job resources

Chandrasekar (2007) argues that job resources are divided into task-based resources connoted by job autonomy and relational resources connoted by personnel interaction. The role of job resources is to attenuate the impact of job demands, and adequate job resources have a positive motivational effect on employees and are an essential source of occupational happiness for employees (Demerouti et al. 2001).

Collectively, job resources can be divided into organizational and social factors.

Organizational factors include compensation and benefits, performance appraisal and decision-making participation, including salary, job promotion, and security, and belong to the low level and the most fundamental demand (Guo 2021). Performance is the most visual measurement of workability. Fan & Fu (2011) believe that elementary school teachers' merit pay is based on teachers' actual performance and contribution. The incentive-oriented role of merit pay should be brought into play. Teachers in elementary schools cannot be evaluated by visible and measurable indicators such as student achievement and promotion rates. The relationship between performance and work reality is difficult to weigh, easily leading to unfair and incomprehensive assessment. How the school evaluates teachers directly affects teachers' occupational experience of emotion. In terms of decision-making engagement, Coleman's research found that communication between leaders and decision-making participants is

smoother when there is a closer relationship between them. Hu (2014) pointed out that there are limitations to the school's decision-making without the participation of teachers. Granting the teachers with the right to participate in school decision-making will increase their motivation in teaching and allow them to improve themselves. Teacher participation in decision-making helps to increase teacher enthusiasm and career satisfaction.

Social factors include leadership, parental support, and social concern. The study concluded that the main supports for teachers' occupational happiness are goal achievement and feedback, and finding meaning in their work and social relationships (Kun & Gadanez, 2022). Parental support and affirmation are vital in children's education at the elementary school level, and parental affirmation is an acknowledgement of the teacher's dedication, teaching level and personality.

In addition, appreciation from school leaders means to a certain extent that teachers' performance is recognized, rewarded, and developed, which has a significant motivating effect on teachers' confidence and further development. The values of appreciation and respect contained in supportive feedback from leaders and parents contribute to teachers' occupational happiness (Ji, Feng & Zhao, 2022). Teachers' work environment happiness and sense of access are related to intrinsic psychological resources (Kun & Gadanez, 2022).

Teachers' professional development requires not only individual-level changes but also group-level attention. Educational change activities that involve the whole community are practical and successful. Society needs to pay attention to teachers' physical and mental health and human dignity. Any negative feelings of organizations and individuals who "question and preach" to teachers should be abandoned. Teachers should be given more understanding and trust to reduce their burden and enhance their occupational happiness from the system.

Conceptual framework and research hypothesis

This study draws the hypothetical models based on the JD-R model, relying on the experience and findings of previous scholars' studies and fully integrating the current situation of the R elementary school teacher profession.

Hypothesizes: Occupational, personal, organizational, and social factors influence the occupational happiness of R elementary school teachers.

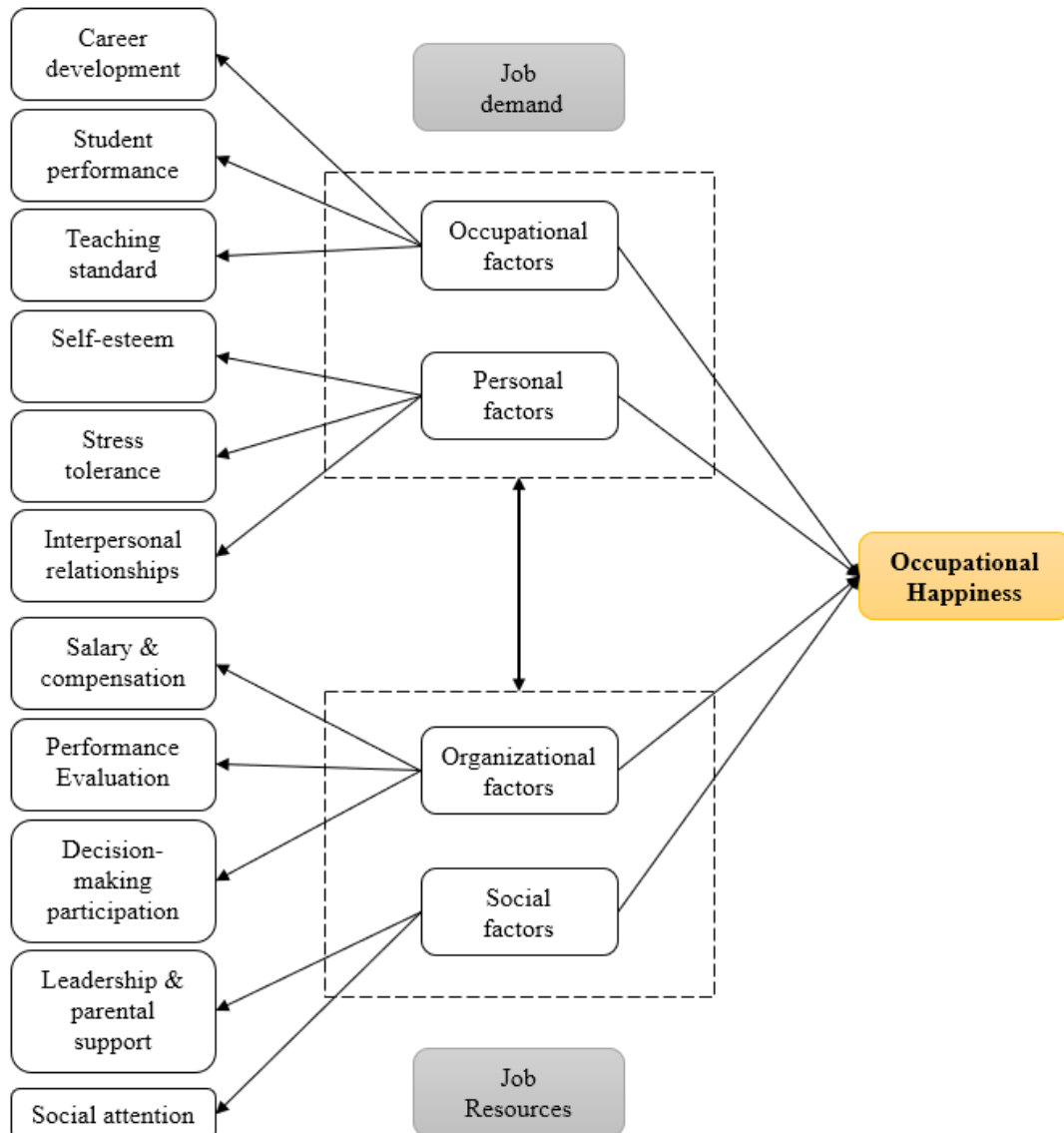


Fig. 2. JD-R based conceptual research framework

Research Methodology

The study was conducted using a random sample of all teachers in R elementary school, and the questionnaire was sent and collected through an exclusive QR code.

A 5-point Likert scale is used for responding to the 21-item questionnaires. The selected scales are multi-item scales developed and used by domestic and international researchers, and the instrument possesses good reliability and validity.

Questionnaire pretest and final test

To verify the scale's accuracy and reliability and ensure the scientific validity and value of this study, two validity and reliability analysis indicators were first measured. A pretest sample of 70 questionnaires was distributed, and 64 valid questionnaires were collected. Before conducting the formal research, the reliability and validity of the scale were tested using the pretest sample data, and the questionnaire was further tested and revised based on the reliability and validity results. The sample is from R elementary school teachers. Based on Hair et al. (2014), 129 questionnaires were distributed to the formal measurement subjects, and 125 valid questionnaires were collected.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the scale instrument's results. The Cronbach's α coefficient method is generally employed to determine the internal consistency of individual scales within the questionnaire. Occupational factors, personal factors, organizational factors, social factors, and occupational happiness all yielded coefficients of Cronbach's Alpha above 0.700 on the overall scale. The internal consistency between the scale items suggests that the reliability of this questionnaire is strong. Table 1 shows the Cronbach's alpha of the data.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha results

	Cronbach's Alpha	Items
Occupational factor	0.86	3
Personal factor	0.827	3
Organizational factor	0.752	3
Social factor	0.778	2
Occupational Happiness	0.940	10
Overall	0.936	21

Validity

Before the factor analysis, the correlation between each question item must be measured. The paper adopts Bartlett's sphericity test and KMO sample measure. The test results revealed that the KMO=0.711 and the p-value of Bartlett's sphericity test were $0.000 < 0.05$, demonstrating the suitability for factor analysis.

The total variance explained result shows that the loading cumulative is 79.078% with four components. The results indicate that the extracted common factor can summarize 79.078% of the question items with a small loss value.

The attribution of the different measurement items is clear from the results of the rotated component matrix, and the categorization of the items is performed with a factor loading value greater than 0.5 for each measurement item. The first dimension represents the personal factor; the second dimension represents the occupational factor; the third dimension represents the organizational factor, and the fourth dimension represents the social factor. all questions are valid.

To conclude, the scale possesses good validity. Table 2 illustrates the collection of results of the validity analysis.

Table 2. Validity analysis

KMO and Bartlett's test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.711
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	625.864
	df	55
	Sig.	.000

Total Variance Explained									
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.447	31.337	31.337	3.447	31.337	31.337	2.385	21.682	21.682
2	2.135	19.409	50.746	2.135	19.409	50.746	2.365	21.496	43.178
3	1.784	16.218	66.964	1.784	16.218	66.964	2.183	19.848	63.025
4	1.333	12.114	79.078	1.333	12.114	79.078	1.766	16.053	79.078
5	.477	4.334	83.412						
6	.424	3.853	87.265						
7	.370	3.363	90.628						
8	.330	3.004	93.631						
9	.280	2.544	96.176						
10	.227	2.067	98.243						
11	.193	1.757	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Self-esteem	.907	.144	.121	.007
Stress tolerance	.876	.059	.114	-.061
Interpersonal relationships	.851	.102	.081	.172
Teaching standard	.053	.888	.111	.001
Student performance	.128	.873	.002	.040
Career development	.110	.867	.076	-.008
Salary & Compensation	.136	.052	.852	.084
Performance evaluation	.043	.148	.832	.151
Decision-making participation	.122	-.004	.816	.107
Leadership & parental support	.045	-.029	.169	.921
Social attention	.043	.053	.136	.917

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Explanation

This section uses Pearson correlation analysis to examine the relationship between the variables, including teaching standards, student performance, career development, self-esteem, stress tolerance, interpersonal relationships, salary & compensation, performance evaluation, decision-making participation, leadership & parental support, and social attention, and occupational happiness. The analysis results demonstrated that they were all significantly and positively correlated with occupational happiness ($p < 0.05$).

Table 3 shows the correlation of each variable compare with occupational happiness. TS = “Teaching standard”, SP = “Student performance”, CD = “Career development”, SE = “Self-esteem”, ST = “Stress tolerance”, IR = “Interpersonal relationships”, SC = “Salary & compensation”, PE = “Performance evaluation”, DMP = “Decision-making participation, LPS = “Leadership & parental support, SA = “Social attention, OH = “Occupational happiness”.

Table 3. Correlation of the data

Correlation	TS	SP	CD	SE	ST	IR	SC	PE	DMP	LPS	SA	OH
TS	1											
SP	.646**	1										
CD	.680**	.692**	1									
SE	.224*	.230**	.195*	1								
ST	.161	.166	.115	.747**	1							
IR	.191*	.198*	.147	.725**	.603**	1						
SC	.118	.058	.169	.207*	.203*	.233**	1					
PE	.051	.067	.104	.200*	.191*	.182*	.574**	1				
DMP	.213*	.132	.175	.194*	.133	.139	.627**	.550**	1			
LPS	-.006	.015	.005	.055	-.001	.216*	.234**	.250**	.257**	1		
SA	.052	.080	.066	.085	.045	.150	.202*	.207*	.268**	.747**	1	
OH	.547**	.536**	.558**	.633**	.535**	.630**	.516**	.468**	.524**	.372**	.382**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), N=125

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Regression

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to further examine how each factor affects occupational happiness. Analytical results showed that the R-squared of the regression model was 0.883 and the adjusted R-squared was 0.872, $F=77.804$, $p < 0.05$, indicating that the overall amount of variance explained by the model reached a significant level.

The unstandardized regression coefficients are:

0.109 ($p < 0.05$) for salary and compensation,

- 0.083 ($p < 0.05$) for social attention,
- 0.115 ($p < 0.05$) for teaching standard,
- 0.112 ($p < 0.05$) for student performance,
- 0.153 ($p < 0.05$) for career development,
- 0.136 ($p < 0.05$) for decision-making participation,
- 0.098 ($p < 0.05$) for stress tolerance,
- 0.167 ($p < 0.05$) for self-esteem,
- 0.101 ($p < 0.05$) for performance evaluation,
- 0.100 ($p < 0.05$) for interpersonal relationships, and
- 0.124 ($p < 0.05$) for leadership & parental support,

The data indicated that all of the above constants had a significant positive effect on the occupational happiness of R elementary school teachers. Table 4 shows the regression model of the data.

Table 4. Regression model

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.940 ^a	.883	.872	.39459		

a. Predictors: (Constant): TS, SP, CD, SE, ST, IR, SC, PE, DMP, LPS, SA, OH

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	133.258	11	12.114	77.804	.000 ^b
	Residual	17.594	113	.156		
	Total	150.852	124			

a. Dependent Variable: OH
b. Predictors: (Constant): TS, SP, CD, SE, ST, IR, SC, PE, DMP, LPS, SA, OH

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.951	.143		-6.654	.000
	SC	.109	.040	.138	2.708	.008
	SA	.083	.040	.102	2.071	.041
	TS	.115	.035	.158	3.321	.001

SP	.112	.037	.143	2.994	.003
CD	.153	.038	.203	4.067	.000
DMP	.136	.045	.176	3.035	.003
ST	.098	.039	.125	2.514	.013
SE	.167	.038	.222	4.455	.000
PE	.101	.035	.129	2.839	.005
IR	.100	.035	.121	2.887	.005
LPS	.124	.039	.144	3.195	.002

a. Dependent Variable: OH

Result and Discussion

The study validated the factors influencing the occupational happiness of R elementary school teachers through a path established on the JD-R model. The conventional JD-R model barely addresses personal value and development, and ignores its influence on burnout and occupational happiness. Accordingly, this study supplemented and refined the model. The analysis shows that R elementary school teachers are most concerned with self-esteem and career development, and the dominance of self-awareness is different from the traditional emphasis on “social value”, which proves that teachers’ professional beliefs are closely related to their values.

Holistically, the occupational happiness of elementary school teachers needs the combined efforts of teachers themselves, managers at all levels, and society. The “double reduction” policy aims to use administrative means to force schools into accelerating the equalization of quality resources, creating conditions to improve the quality of teaching, and reforming teachers' assessment and evaluation to achieve holistic changes in basic education teaching.

Job resources are the critical to achieving job demands. The pace of self-improvement among R elementary school teachers is not in line with the needs of the policy, and the original curriculum design and teaching methods no longer meet the requirements of "reducing the burden on students". Nonetheless, teachers do not have sufficient time and energy for study and further education, resulting in increased conflicts. Meanwhile, with the substantial increase in workload, the lag in compensation and evaluation mechanisms has resulted in teachers causing a psychological imbalance with unchanged salaries. Consequently, there is a need to truly improve teachers' remuneration, embody the value of work, provide effective incentives, advocate reasonable social role expectations, and introduce social resources to participate to reduce the burden of after-school services for teachers. It provides teachers with a platform for professional enhancement, gives them corresponding autonomy, and guarantees more educational resources to elementary school teachers (Liu, Hou and Huang 2021). Only when the nature of love for work becomes a need for elementary school teachers can they bring full initiative and creativity into their work and experience occupational happiness.

The model in this paper provides a reference for teacher management and development in R elementary schools and helps to develop policy research in terms of job demands and job resource balance advancement. Administrators are urged to focus on the intrinsic link between individual teacher development and school development. The lack of occupational happiness of elementary school teachers in the western region of China has been highlighted during a specific period when the policy measures of "double reduction" are not yet well developed. As a local model school, the results of the study of R Primary School are revealing in practice.

Regarding the limitations of the study, the traditional JD-R model showed the prevalence of various occupations in the study population. Owing to the unique nature of the elementary school teacher profession, moderating variables such as the gender and job rank of the subjects can be appropriately introduced in the model revision to explore more precise group needs in a stratified manner.

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