

The Effect of Job Burnout on Teachers' Turnover Intentions in Primary and Secondary Schools - The Case of Aksu District[†]

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Abstract

This paper investigates the impact of job burnout on the turnover intentions of primary and secondary school teachers in the Aksu district of Xinjiang, China, using social exchange theory as a lens. Utilizing a quantitative approach, the research engaged 407 teachers through a questionnaire survey, collecting data on the key dimensions of job burnout - emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment - and their correlation with teachers' intentions to leave their profession. The demographic profile of respondents indicated a majority of females, aged 31 - 40 years, with a bachelor's degree and 6 - 10 years of teaching experience. Descriptive analysis revealed that job burnout is perceived positively, with significant agreement on the aspects of depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. Correlation and regression analyses demonstrated a significant positive relationship between job burnout and turnover intention, with each dimension of burnout - emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment - having a substantial positive effect on the propensity to leave. The research concludes that job burnout significantly influences teachers' intentions to leave their jobs, underscoring the necessity for educational administrations to address burnout among faculty. To prevent burnout and reduce turnover rates, it is recommended to provide adequate work resources, enhance work environments, and offer professional development opportunities. The research acknowledges limitations regarding sample diversity and data collection timeframes, suggesting future studies expand sample representation and explore additional factors influencing burnout.

Keywords: Job burnout, Turnover intention, Teachers, China

Introduction

Teacher turnover is a serious issue in education in the Aksu district and job burnout is considered to be related to turnover intention. This research aims to investigate the effects of job burnout on the intention of primary and secondary school teachers to leave their jobs in the Aksu district and to propose corresponding management suggestions to improve teachers' job satisfaction (Adiguna & Suwandana, 2023).

Aksu district is a prefecture-level city located in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous District of China, with rich resources and diverse ethnic cultures, and education has always been an important part of the district's development. In the current state of education in Aksu, primary and secondary education plays a crucial role in training future talents and promoting local development. However, with the socio-economic development and demographic changes, primary and secondary education in the Aksu district is facing some challenges and problems.

First, there is a relative lack of educational resources in the Aksu district. Due to its remote location, Aksu district has relatively few educational resources. Especially in some remote rural areas, the insufficient number of primary and secondary school teachers and the lack of teaching equipment bring great pressure and trouble to teachers' work (Heng et al., 2021). Secondly, teachers' work pressure is high. Due to the relative shortage of educational resources in Aksu, teachers generally face heavy workloads and

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high pressure. Teachers need to face complex teaching environments and work problems such as large class size teaching and students' special needs, which make teachers' work pressure increase and easily lead to the phenomenon of job burnout, which leads to the intention of teachers to leave their jobs (Agyapong et al., 2022).

Therefore, it is of great practical significance and applied value to research the effect of job burnout on the intention of primary and secondary school teachers to leave their jobs in Aksu. Only with the understanding of job burnout, corresponding measures can be taken to improve teachers' working environment and job satisfaction and to increase teachers' stability and retention. Specifically, the research questions are as follows: Does job burnout significantly affect the turnover intention among primary and secondary school teachers in Aksu district?

The specific objectives of the study are:

- 1) To describe the current situation of job burnout and turnover intention of school teachers in the Aksu district.
- 2) To analyze the characteristics of school teachers about turnover intention in the Aksu District.
- 3) To examine the role of job burnout in effect on turnover intention among school teachers in the Aksu District.

Terminology

Burnout is a state of physical and mental exhaustion, emotional exhaustion, and loss of interest and motivation in the work environment (Maslach et al., 2001).

Emotional exhaustion is the feeling that one's resources (both triumphant and emotional) have been depleted and that one is physically and mentally exhausted, listless, and no longer energetic (Xiao, 2020).

Depersonalization refers to an individual's negative reaction to work, viewing work with detachment and indifference (Maslach et al., 2001).

Reduced personal accomplishment refers to a supervisor's evaluation of the value and significance of his or her work and self, which is manifested in lowered self-esteem (Xiao, 2020).

The turnover intention is the intention of a faculty member to build up a level of dissatisfaction and stress with the current work environment or organization that causes the faculty member to begin to consider quitting or looking for a new job opportunity (Adiguna & Suwandana, 2023).

Literature review

Academic research on job burnout is relatively recent. Freudenberger (1974) first proposed that job burnout refers to a state of psychological exhaustion and emptiness in the individual during the work process, which is often caused by the overutilization of personal abilities and resources. Maslach et al. (2001) combined the emotions and energy negative reactions experienced by an individual over a long period at work and called it job burnout. This psychological state leaves a person feeling extremely tired, losing interest and motivation in their work, and unable to approach their work with a conscientious and responsible attitude. The present research considers burnout as a state of physical, mental, and emotional negativity that results from prolonged periods of high stress and high workload (Rua et al., 2023).

The turnover phenomenon first appeared in the research of economists, who mainly researched the direction of salary and work opportunities and analyzed the mechanisms behind the turnover of employees. Turnover intention began to attract attention and became the subject of research. Mobley et al. (1978) considered the process in which employees who are dissatisfied with their current job compare job promotion opportunities, salary, and compensation, and then the behavior of leaving the job. In addition, Wei and Tong (2020) pointed out in their thesis that turnover intention refers to the psychological state in which individuals desire to leave their existing job positions and seek new job opportunities due to certain factors. The present research considers turnover intention as the intention of employees to accumulate a certain level of dissatisfaction and stress with their current work environment or organization that causes them to start thinking about leaving their jobs or looking for a new job opportunity (Adiguna & Suwandana, 2023).

Research theory

Social exchange theory originated at the beginning of the 20th century and has since evolved with the contributions of numerous researchers (Aydin, 2020). According to the theory, social exchange is the result of two-way mutual benefit, which centers on the exchange of material and spiritual resources between individuals and organizations for benefit sharing and trust building. According to the social exchange theory, we can assume that there is a tacit exchange relationship between organizations and individuals. Job burnout, as a state that accompanies the process of organizational development for a long time, also subconsciously reflects such a set of tacit exchange relations. Neck et al. (2023) argued that individuals are more likely to leave their jobs when they are under greater stress, at which point individual job burnout and turnover intention work to form a pair of exchange relationships.

Prior research and hypothesis development

Many studies have shown that there is a positive relationship between job burnout and turnover intentions. Wahyono & Riyanto (2020) examined the effect of job burnout on the relationship of turnover intention and found that each dimension of job burnout positively predicted the turnover intention of skilled employees. As suggested by Yang (2022), burnout among young civil servants at the grassroots level had a positive effect on their willingness to leave, with emotional exhaustion having the most significant effect. Similarly, Li (2022) found that there was a significant positive correlation between burnout and willingness to leave among grassroots civil servants. Chen (2021), in survey research of 276 teachers, found that burnout was positively correlated with teachers' willingness to leave in 15 special education schools in Guizhou Province. In addition, Shan (2020) found that burnout among university teachers had a significant positive effect on turnover intentions, with emotional exhaustion and low achievement being important factors affecting turnover intentions but not having a significant effect on humanization. Sai (2020), in a survey of employees of construction companies in Laos, found that there was a significant positive correlation between burnout and its 3 sub-dimensions and turnover intentions. Through a review of the existing literature, we also found that both studies of employees in enterprises and studies of teachers showed that burnout was a positive predictor of turnover intentions. Xie and Bao (2019) conducted a questionnaire survey of 460 university teachers, and the results showed a significant positive correlation between burnout and turnover intentions among university teachers. Burnout and its dimensions were found to have a direct negative impact on teachers' propensity to leave (Ernes & Meilani, 2023). When teachers experience burnout over a prolonged period, dimensions such as emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment can weaken employees' sense of identification with the organization, reduce job satisfaction, and lead to unfulfilled expectations, further increasing the willingness to leave (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Job burnout may also lead to an increase in psychological stress among teachers, which may affect their commitment to their jobs, thus exacerbating their turnover intention (Adiguna & Suwandana, 2023).

Based on the literature review and social exchange theory, the following research hypotheses were formulated in this research:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive effect of job burnout on the intention of primary and secondary school teachers in the Aksu district to leave their jobs.

Hypothesis 1.1: There is a positive effect of emotional depletion on the intention of primary and secondary school teachers in the Aksu district to leave their jobs.

Hypothesis 1.2: There is a positive effect of depersonalization on the intention of primary and secondary school teachers in the Aksu district to leave their jobs.

Hypothesis 1.3: There is a positive effect of reduced sense of self-achievement on the intention of primary and secondary school teachers in the Aksu district to leave their jobs.

Research framework

Based on the social exchange theory and the literature, the conceptual framework of this research states that emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment have an impact on the turnover intention of a job (**Figure 1**).

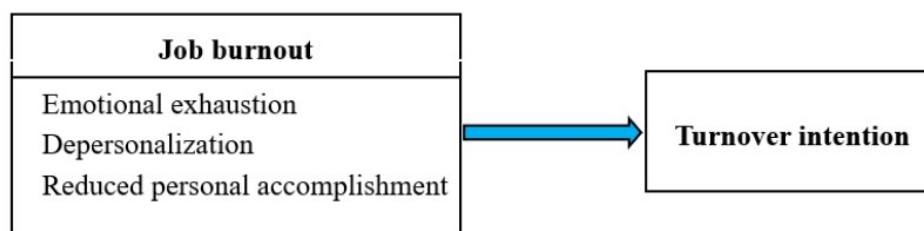


Figure 1 Conceptual framework of the impact of burnout on turnover intention.

Methodology

This paper combines the content of previous literature and related theories and designs a questionnaire survey in combination with the research needed to effectively obtain the data related to job burnout and the turnover intention of primary and secondary school teachers in Aksu City. The study mainly takes primary and secondary school teachers in Aksu City as the research object and uses simple random sampling to conduct the survey. According to the official statistics and estimation of Aksu City (as of March 12, 2022), there are currently 3,951 full-time teachers in general primary and secondary schools in Aksu City. To ensure the reliability of the sampling, this paper adopts Taro Yamane's formula to calculate the sample size (Yamane, 1973) by using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

where n = sample size, N = population size = 3951; e = error (0.05) reliability level 95 % or; e = level of precision always set the value of 0.05.

According to the aforementioned formula, the sample size is 363. However, this study set sample size to 407 samples to prevent errors from collecting data. Simple random sampling was used for sample size collection in this paper.

The research instrument utilized in this study is an online questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was developed based on data and concepts gathered from the literature review to ensure its content relevance and coverage. The initial version of the questionnaire was reviewed and modified by a supervisor and 3 experts to enhance its appropriateness. The questionnaire's content validity was analyzed by calculating the Index of Content Validity (IOC) for each item. The result of the IOC test scored 0.942 and the questionnaire is valid.

This study utilizes descriptive statistics to explain basic information of participants and the current situation of job burnout and turnover intention of school teachers in the Aksu district, consisting of frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

Additionally, correlation and regression analysis were used to explore the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables in various hypotheses.

Results and discussion

Based on the basic information including gender, age, educational background, work experience, school and city distribution in the information of this survey, it is analyzed as follows:

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics on Demographic Information (n = 407).

Name	Options	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative percent
Gender	Male	157	38.57	38.57
	Female	250	61.43	100.00
Age	Under 30	60	14.74	14.74
	31 - 40	159	39.07	53.81
	41 - 50	111	27.27	81.08
	Above 50	77	18.92	100.00
Educational background	Below bachelor's degree	65	15.97	15.97
	Bachelor's degree	274	67.32	83.29
	Master's degree or above	68	16.71	100.00
Working experience	1 - 5 years	60	14.74	14.74
	6 - 10 years	168	41.28	56.02
	11 - 15 years	112	27.52	83.54
	More than 15 years	67	16.46	100.00
School	Primary school	198	48.65	48.65
	Secondary school	209	51.35	100.00
City	Aksu	241	59.21	59.21
	Kuche	166	40.79	100.00
Total		407	100.0	100.0

Table 1 shows that from a gender perspective, more than 60 % of the samples were female, while males accounted for 38.57 %. From the age point of view, 39.07 % of the sample is between 31 and 40 years old. In terms of educational background, 67.32 % had a bachelor's degree. In terms of teaching experience, 41.28 % have 6 - 10 years of teaching experience. In terms of school, more than 50 % of the sample were secondary school teachers. In addition, the proportion of elementary school teachers was 48.65 %. In terms of urban distribution, 59.21 % were from Aksu city, whereas the city of Kuche accounted for 40.79 %.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Job Burnout (n = 407).

Question	Mean	Standard deviation	Level of perception
Emotional exhaustion	4.275	0.956	Somewhat agree
Depersonalization	4.395	0.852	Agree
Reduced personal accomplishment	4.389	1.114	Agree
Job Burnout	4.371	0.883	Agree

Table 2 reported that the overall mean for burnout among school teachers was 4.371. This indicates that school teachers agreed that burnout may result from depersonalization (mean = 4.395) and reduced

personal fulfillment (mean = 4.389), respectively. On the other hand, the respondents agreed to some extent that emotional exhaustion (mean = 4.275) produces burnout.

Table 3 Descriptive statistic on turnover intention (n = 407).

Question	Mean	Standard deviation	Level of perception	Rank
1) I feel it would be more advantageous to teach at another school.	4.425	1.093	Agree	4
2) I have often thought of leaving this school.	4.428	1.144	Agree	2
3) I want to quit my teaching career for another career.	4.428	1.163	Agree	2
4) If given the chance, I would quit my job as a teacher.	4.450	1.102	Agree	1
5) I have been looking for a career outside of teaching lately.	4.398	1.146	Agree	5
Turnover intention	4.426	0.939	Agree	

The current status of teachers' intention to leave their jobs in primary and secondary schools in the Aksu district is shown in **Table 3**. The mean value of teachers' intention to leave their jobs in primary and secondary schools is 4.426, which indicates that there is an intention to leave their jobs to some extent.

Table 4 Correlation analysis between job burnout and turnover intention (n = 407).

	TI	EE	DE	RPA
Turnover Intention: TI	1			
Emotional exhaustion: EE	0.376**	1		
Depersonalization: DE	0.364**	0.443**	1	
Reduced personal accomplishment: RPA	0.368**	0.434**	0.364**	1

**The correlation was significant at 0.01 level (two-tailed)

As can be seen in **Table 4**, the correlation coefficient between emotional exhaustion and propensity to leave is 0.376, which indicates that there is some degree of positive correlation between emotional exhaustion and propensity to leave. This indicates that teachers who are more emotionally disturbed may be more likely to have the intention to leave. The correlation coefficient between depersonalization and turnover intention is 0.364 which indicates that there is a positive relationship between depersonalization and turnover intention. This implies that depersonalization may lead to teachers' intention to leave. The correlation coefficient between reduced personal accomplishment and turnover intention is 0.368 which indicates that there is a positive relationship between reduced personal accomplishment and turnover intention. This implies that teachers with low achievement may be more inclined to quit their jobs.

Table 5 Results of regression analysis of turnover intention on job burnout (n=407).

	Standardized Coefficients <i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	-	6.476	0.000**
Job burnout	0.473	10.809	0.000**

$R^2 = 0.224$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.222$, $F = 116.831$, $p = 0.000$ **

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

As can be seen from **Table 5**, job burnout is used as the independent variable while turnover intention is used as the dependent variable in the regression analysis. The model R-squared value is 0.224,

which means that job burnout explains the reason for 22.4 % of the change in turnover intention. The F-test of the model found that the model passes the F-test ($F = 116.831, p = 0.000 < 0.05$), which means that job burnout must have an impact relationship on turnover intention. The value of the regression coefficient of job burnout is $0.473 (t = 10.809, p = 0.000 < 0.01)$, which means that job burnout will have a significant positive influence on turnover intention.

Based on this information, we can draw the following conclusions: The regression coefficient of job burnout shows a significant difference, indicating that job burnout has a significant positive effect on turnover intention.

Table 6 Regression analysis of turnover intention on job burnout ($n = 407$).

	Standardized Coefficients <i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	VIF
Constant	-	6.312	0.000**	-
Emotional exhaustion	0.196	3.790	0.000**	1.393
Depersonalization	0.200	3.999	0.000**	1.303
Reduced personal accomplishment	0.210	4.213	0.000**	1.291

$R^2 = 0.224$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.218$, $F = 38.782, p = 0.000^{**}$

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

As can be seen in **Table 6**, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment are the independent variables while intention to leave is the dependent variable, thus allowing for regression analysis. The R-squared value of the model is 0.224, which means that emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment explain 22.4 % of the change in turnover intention. An F-test of the model found that the model passed the F-test ($F = 38.782, p = 0.000 < 0.05$), which means that at least one of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment affects the intention to leave the job. In addition, a multicollinearity test of the model found that the VIF values in the model were all less than 5, indicating that there was no multicollinearity problem and the model was better. Finally, the regression coefficient value of emotional exhaustion is 0.196 ($t = 3.790, p = 0.000 < 0.01$), which indicates that emotional exhaustion will have a significant positive effect on turnover intention. The regression coefficient value of depersonalization is 0.200 ($t = 3.999, p = 0.000 < 0.01$), which means that depersonalization will have a significant positive effect on turnover intention. The value of the regression coefficient of personal accomplishment reduction is 0.210 ($t = 4.213, p = 0.000 < 0.01$), which means that personal accomplishment reduction will have a significant positive effect on the intention to leave.

Based on all the above statistical analysis tests and results, **Table 7** summarizes the results of the research hypothesis test.

Table 7 Test results of research hypotheses.

Research Hypothesis	Result
Hypothesis 1: There is a positive effect of job burnout on the intention of primary and secondary school teachers in the Aksu district to leave their jobs.	Supported
Hypothesis 1.1: There is a positive effect of emotional depletion on the intention of primary and secondary school teachers in the Aksu district to leave their jobs.	Supported
Hypothesis 1.2: There is a positive effect of depersonalization on the intention of primary and secondary school teachers in the Aksu district to leave their jobs.	Supported
Hypothesis 1.3: There is a positive effect of reduced sense of self-achievement on the intention of primary and secondary school teachers in the Aksu district to leave their jobs.	Supported

Table 7 summarizes the test results of the hypotheses related to the effect of different aspects of job burnout on the turnover intention of primary and secondary school teachers in the Aksu district.

The findings reveal that job burnout has a significant positive effect on turnover intention. In addition, the findings indicate that all components of job burnout, including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, have a significant and positive effect on the intention to leave the job. These findings are in line with Ratnasari and Sunarto (2022), Fatriya and Hidayati (2022), and Madigan and Kim (2021) who report a positive relationship between burnout and teachers' intentions to quit.

The findings of this research are of great significance for understanding the job burnout of primary and secondary school teachers and their effect on turnover intention.

Firstly, the results indicate that depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment are key factors affecting teacher turnover intention. This may be because when teachers have a cold attitude toward students or feel that their teaching effectiveness is not recognized, they are more likely to consider leaving the education industry. Therefore, school administrators and policymakers should attach importance to the interpersonal relationships and professional achievement of teachers and alleviate these pressures by providing psychological support and professional growth opportunities.

Secondly, although the relationship between emotional exhaustion and turnover intention is weak, it does not mean that it can be ignored. Emotional exhaustion may reflect the emotional pressure that teachers face when dealing with student and work needs, and in the long run, it may lead to overall damage to the well-being of teachers. Therefore, improving the emotional health of teachers is also important.

In this research, we found that the 3 dimensions of job burnout - emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment - are significantly positively correlated with teacher turnover intention. This discovery is consistent with social exchange theory, which suggests that individuals may consider leaving when they feel an imbalance between effort and reward (Madigan & Kim, 2021).

Conclusions

This research examines the effect of job burnout on the turnover intention of a job by analyzing a survey of teaching staff in Aksu. The results of the research showed that job burnout has a significant positive effect on the turnover intention of the job. The findings of this paper are consistent with the findings of Ratnasari and Sunarto (2022), Fatriya and Hidayati (2022), and Madigan and Kim (2021). In addition, the findings point out that emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, have a significant and positive effect on the intention to leave the job. Therefore, educational administrations should pay attention to the problem of burnout among faculty members and reduce the level of burnout and turnover by providing appropriate work resources, improving the work environment, and providing opportunities for professional development.

Although many factors were considered in the research process, the results of the research still have some limitations due to the problems of time, budget, and data collection. This paper surveys teachers in some schools in the Aksu district of Xinjiang, and its results can only be interpreted in a limited way through questionnaires. Therefore, it does not represent the whole situation of primary and secondary school teachers in the district. Moreover, this study collected data at specific points in time which may result in the results of the research not reflecting trends over a longer period, thus affecting the applicability of the results of the research. Budgetary constraints of the research may affect the size of the sample or the extent of data collection. Thus, it may not be possible to conduct a comprehensive statistical analysis or expand the sample size, which may affect the accuracy and representativeness of the research findings.

Given the aforementioned limitations, future research could be conducted in the following areas:

First, further research may address the lack of diversity and representativeness of the research sample; the coverage of the research sample may be expanded to ensure the diversity and representativeness of the sample.

Second, further research may examine multiple potential influences on burnout, including individual characteristics, work environment, and social support systems.

Third, further research may analyze the impact of existing educational policies on teachers' burnout and turnover intention in their jobs and make policy recommendations for improving teachers' work environment and well-being.

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