

The problem and countermeasures of occupational burnout among private teachers based on the hierarchy of needs theory

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Abstract: This article uses Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory to explore in depth the issue of occupational burnout among private teachers. The hierarchy of needs theory holds that human needs are divided into five levels from low to high: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. Research has shown that the professional burnout of private teachers mainly stems from the unmet needs in multiple aspects. These factors include but are not limited to lower economic income (affecting physiological and safety needs), insufficient job stability (affecting safety needs), heavy workload, and lack of social support (affecting social needs), as well as low recognition and limited career development opportunities (affecting respect and self-actualization needs).

1. Introduction

In the rapidly changing social environment, education, as one of the important cornerstones of national development, is closely related to the overall quality of the teaching staff in terms of its quality. Especially for private educational institutions, teachers are not only knowledge transmitters, but also important forces in shaping students' personalities and promoting their comprehensive development. However, while pursuing high-quality education, many private teachers are facing enormous work pressure and challenges, which directly leads to the widespread phenomenon of occupational burnout. This article aims to use Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory to deeply explore the phenomenon of professional burnout among private teachers and its underlying reasons, and based on this, propose corresponding countermeasures and suggestions, providing reference for building a more harmonious working environment in the field of private education.

2. Overview

The hierarchy of needs theory proposed by American psychologist Abraham Maslow provides a unique perspective for understanding occupational burnout. This theory divides human needs into five levels: physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. According to this theoretical framework, people will only seek the realization of higher-level needs when lower level needs are met. Therefore, by examining the needs of private teachers at all levels, we can more comprehensively grasp the fundamental causes

of their professional burnout and propose effective intervention measures based on this. Occupational burnout refers to a state of physical and mental exhaustion that occurs when an individual is under long-term high stress, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a decrease in personal sense of achievement. This state not only affects the physical and mental health of individual teachers, but may also have a negative impact on teaching quality and student growth. In recent years, with the increasing attention of various sectors of society to the mental health issues of teachers, how to effectively alleviate occupational burnout has become an urgent problem to be solved.^[1]

3. The problems of occupational burnout among private teachers based on the hierarchy of needs theory

3.1. Physiological needs

The physiological needs of teachers in private universities due to occupational burnout mainly manifest in the dual pressure of physical and mental health. Long term occupational pressure and high-intensity workload may lead to physical symptoms such as sleep disorders, chronic fatigue, and weakened immunity in teachers, which directly affect their physical health. Meanwhile, sustained emotional tension and mental stress may also trigger or exacerbate various psychological problems, such as anxiety and depression, further affecting the mental health status of teachers. In addition, occupational burnout may also lower the quality of life of teachers, reduce their time for physical exercise and other leisure activities, thereby forming a negative cycle that further deteriorates their physical health. In addition, many private teachers have reported that their income level is low and they find it difficult to meet their basic living needs. This directly leads to economic pressure and increases the risk of occupational burnout. The salary and benefits of teachers in private universities are often lower than those in public universities, especially in some financially limited private colleges. This not only affects the basic living needs of teachers, but may also lead to them having to engage in additional work or part-time jobs to increase their income. Therefore, addressing the issue of occupational burnout is crucial for maintaining the overall well-being of teachers in private universities.^[2]

3.2. Security requirements

The safety needs of teachers in private universities due to occupational burnout mainly manifest in concerns about job stability and career future. When teachers experience long-term work pressure and emotional exhaustion, they may feel that their positions are unstable and worry about losing their jobs due to poor performance or changes in school operations. This uncertainty increases the professional insecurity of teachers. In addition, occupational burnout may also lead to teachers feeling confused and lacking confidence in their career development prospects, including doubts about future promotion opportunities, professional growth space, and personal ability enhancement. In this situation, teachers may also worry about their economic and social status being affected, further exacerbating their overall sense of insecurity. Therefore, addressing occupational burnout not only requires attention to the mental health of teachers, but also enhances their sense of occupational security by providing a stable working environment, clear career development paths, and supportive policies.^[3]

3.3. Social needs

The social needs of teachers in private universities due to occupational burnout mainly manifest

in interpersonal relationships and team collaboration. Long term occupational pressure and workload may cause teachers to feel exhausted, thereby reducing opportunities for effective communication and collaboration with colleagues, and affecting team cohesion and work efficiency. In addition, occupational burnout may cause teachers to become emotionally low, irritable, or distant, which further weakens the quality of their interpersonal relationships with students, colleagues, and even family and friends. Teachers may gradually reduce their participation in collective activities and social interactions, leading to a lack of support networks in their work and an increased sense of isolation. This social isolation not only reduces teachers' job satisfaction, but may also have a negative impact on their mental health, forming a vicious cycle. Therefore, in order to meet the social needs of teachers, private universities need to create an open and supportive campus culture, encourage positive interpersonal interaction, provide psychological counseling and support services, and enhance the connection and sense of belonging among teachers through team building activities.^[4]

3.4. Respect needs

The issue of respect needs among teachers in private universities due to occupational burnout is mainly reflected in the decline of self-worth and professional recognition. Long term work pressure and emotional exhaustion may lead teachers to feel that their efforts are not receiving the recognition they deserve, whether from students, colleagues, or management. This lack of recognition can weaken teachers' sense of professional achievement and personal self-esteem. In addition, occupational burnout may also cause teachers to doubt their professional abilities and teaching effectiveness, leading to a decrease in self-evaluation and further affecting their confidence and work enthusiasm. In such a situation, teachers may feel marginalized or undervalued, which not only damages their motivation for work, but also affects their status in academia and society. Therefore, private universities need to enhance the professional dignity and self-worth of teachers by establishing a fair and transparent evaluation system, providing professional development opportunities, and strengthening positive feedback mechanisms, in order to meet their respect needs.

3.5. Self-actualization needs

The self-actualization needs of teachers in private universities due to occupational burnout mainly manifest in the realization of personal potential and the achievement of career goals. When teachers are exposed to high-pressure work environments for a long time and feel physically and mentally exhausted, they may lose their enthusiasm for teaching and research, and find it difficult to find the meaning and sense of achievement in their work. In this situation, teachers may find themselves unable to fully utilize their talents and achieve the goals and personal ideals set in their career. Occupational burnout deprives teachers of motivation to pursue innovation and professional growth, thereby limiting their exploration and development in academic research and educational teaching methods. In addition, persistent professional dissatisfaction may also lead to teachers losing confidence in their future career development and no longer actively seeking further learning opportunities or taking on new challenges. This not only hinders the maximization of teachers' personal potential, but also affects their ability to make long-term contributions to the education industry. Therefore, addressing the issue of occupational burnout is crucial for helping teachers regain their passion, stimulate creativity, and promote their comprehensive development in the field of education. By providing a supportive environment and encouraging lifelong learning and innovative practices, private universities can help teachers overcome these barriers and better meet their needs for self-actualization.^[5]

4. Suggestions on countermeasures for occupational burnout among private teachers

4.1. Improve teachers ' salaries and benefits

Private universities increase teacher salaries and benefits through various means to attract and retain outstanding talents. Firstly, the school regularly adjusts the basic salary standards based on market research and local economic conditions to ensure that teacher salaries are competitive. Secondly, establish a comprehensive performance evaluation system that links teachers' teaching quality, research achievements, and service contributions to bonuses. By setting up incentive mechanisms such as teaching and research awards, teachers can increase their sources of income. In addition, the school also provides various subsidies and benefits, such as housing subsidies, transportation subsidies, catering allowances, and holiday benefits, to alleviate the living burden of teachers. For teachers who demonstrate outstanding performance or make special contributions, the school will provide additional rewards or special allowances. At the same time, encourage and support teachers to participate in continuing education and professional development, enhance their personal abilities, and thus obtain higher job ranks and corresponding salary increases. Through these measures, private universities have not only increased the overall salary level of teachers, but also enhanced their professional satisfaction and sense of belonging.

4.2. Improve teachers ' sense of occupational safety

Private universities enhance teachers' sense of professional security through a series of systems and measures. Firstly, the school should establish a sound employment contract system to ensure that every teacher has clear job security, including stable contract terms and renewal mechanisms. Secondly, private universities implement a fair and transparent system for professional title evaluation and promotion, providing clear career development paths for teachers and conducting fair evaluations based on their teaching quality and research achievements. In addition, the school has established a comprehensive performance evaluation system that closely integrates teachers' professional growth with personal welfare, ensuring that outstanding teachers can receive corresponding material rewards and professional recognition. In order to further stabilize the teaching staff, the school provides competitive salary and welfare guarantees, such as health insurance, housing subsidies, etc. At the same time, the school encourages and supports teachers to participate in professional training and continuing education, continuously improving their teaching ability and academic level, thereby increasing their competitiveness in the job market. Through these comprehensive measures, private universities not only enhance teachers' sense of professional security, but also promote their loyalty and long-term service willingness to the school.

4.3. Improve teachers ' sense of identity to the school

Private universities meet the needs of teachers for belonging and love by creating a warm and harmonious campus culture and providing various forms of support. The school emphasizes the establishment of an open and supportive working environment, encourages communication and cooperation among teachers, and enhances mutual understanding and support among teachers through regular team building activities, teaching and research group meetings, and academic salons. In addition, the school attaches great importance to the personal development of teachers, formulates personalized career development plans for each teacher, and provides experienced mentors for one-on-one guidance to help them continuously improve on their career path. In order to strengthen teachers' sense of identification with the school, the school has also established a fair and transparent evaluation and reward mechanism to ensure that teachers' efforts are recognized and

rewarded. At the same time, the school management actively listens to teachers' opinions and suggestions, maintains good communication channels, and solves their practical problems in work and life. Through these measures, private universities not only enhance the professional satisfaction of teachers, but also make them feel the warmth and care from the school family, thereby enhancing their sense of belonging and happiness.

4.4. Improve the social recognition of teachers

Private universities strive to enhance the social recognition of their teachers through various efforts. Firstly, the school is committed to improving the quality of education and academic standards, ensuring that teachers can provide high-quality education and achieve significant research results in their respective fields through strict teaching management and research support. Secondly, the school actively builds platforms to encourage teachers to participate in domestic and international academic conferences, publish high-level papers, and collaborate with industries and enterprises to enhance teachers' professional influence and social visibility. In addition, private universities also establish a fair and transparent professional title evaluation system to ensure that teachers' career development paths are clear and visible. At the same time, various awards are set up to recognize outstanding teachers, and their contributions are affirmed through material rewards and honorary recognition. The school also focuses on publicity and promotion, using media and social platforms to showcase teachers' teaching and research achievements, strengthening communication and exchange with all sectors of society, and gradually improving the social status and public recognition of teachers in private universities. Through these comprehensive measures, private universities not only enhance teachers' sense of professional achievement, but also elevate their image and status in society.

4.5. Promote the professional development of teachers

Private universities promote the professional growth of teachers by building a comprehensive support system. The school regularly organizes teaching method seminars and research skills training to help teachers master the latest educational technologies and research methods; At the same time, provide abundant online learning resources and opportunities for further education, and encourage teachers to enhance their academic and professional qualifications. In addition, the school has established a research fund and supported teachers to participate in domestic and international academic exchanges, enhancing their research capabilities and academic influence. In order to ensure teaching quality, a peer review system is implemented and continuous teaching improvement is carried out based on student feedback. The school has also established a fair mechanism for professional title promotion and performance evaluation, motivating teachers to continuously improve through material rewards and spiritual recognition. Through personalized career development planning, mentorship system, and career counseling services, private universities provide tailored development paths and support for each teacher. Finally, creating a cultural atmosphere that respects knowledge and encourages cooperation, strengthening communication between management and teachers, and creating a favorable environment for the professional growth of teachers in private universities.

5. Conclusion

In the process of solving the problem of professional burnout among teachers in private universities, the school management should deeply understand and apply Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, starting from basic material security, to ensure that teachers can develop in a stable

and secure working environment; At the same time, emphasis should be placed on building a supportive campus culture that enhances the sense of belonging and teamwork among teachers by promoting communication and cooperation among colleagues; Furthermore, teachers' pursuit of respect and self-actualization can be met through a fair recognition system and career development opportunities. Only when these different levels of needs are fully addressed and satisfied can teachers maintain a positive work attitude, reduce the occurrence of occupational burnout, provide higher quality education for students, and promote the sustained and healthy development of the entire school. This is not only a responsibility for the personal well-being of teachers, but also the cornerstone of the long-term development of private higher education institutions.

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