



Full length article

# A Study on Teachers' Turnover Intention amongst Private Higher Vocational Colleges in China

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## ABSTRACT

The retention of qualified and motivated teachers is a critical challenge for private higher vocational colleges in China, to address this issue, a comprehensive examination of the factors influencing turnover intention is conducted. A mixed-method research approach, comprising literature surveys and interviews, is employed to gather data from a diverse sample of teachers working in private higher vocational colleges in China. The study found that compensation, social status, occupational stress, leadership style and the career development are influencing factors of teachers' turnover intention in private higher vocational colleges in China. These findings provide vital insights for educational leaders and policymakers seeking to develop effective teacher retention strategies in these colleges. In addition, the study emphasizes the need for ongoing research to adapt retention strategies to the changing requirements of teachers in this particular educational setting.

## 1. Introduction

Private higher vocational education is an important component of China's higher vocational education. After China's reform and opening-up, private higher vocational colleges (PHVCs) have developed dramatically with the economic transformation and upgrading. According to the statistics of national education in 2022, there are currently 350 PHVCs nationwide, with 8 million students and 58,000 majors covering the main fields of the national economy. The employment rate of graduates is 90% (six months after graduation). In the past three years, 8.5 million families have acquired the first generation of college students through vocational education, which has effectively promoted educational and social equity. According to statistics, in the fields of modern manufacturing, strategic emerging industries and modern service industries, more than 70% of new front-line employees come from vocational college graduates, which has effectively improved the quality of China's human capital and underpinned economic and social development.

From the perspective of the structural relationship among the elements of social productivity, "people" often takes the first place as the first element, and the same is true in the field of private vocational education. The implementation of any education policy and the mission of teaching and educating people ultimately depends

on teachers. In recent years, the relevant studies show that due to dissatisfaction with work and some unfavorable emotions, the turnover problem of PHVC teachers begins to emerge and teachers' turnover intention tend to be more and more obvious. According to a study on the work attractiveness of Chinese universities (MyCOS Center of Chinese Higher Education Data, 2021), private higher vocational colleges have the highest turnover rate, with 17% of teachers indicating they are very likely to leave their positions within the next three years, compared with 3% and 6% for "985" and "211" prestigious higher educational institutions respectively, Li and Gong (2022) conducted a survey of more than 1,800 teachers in 30 PHVCS in China and found that 49% of the respondents had intention to leave.

In the new era, both science-technology and talents are the key factors for PHVCs to gain a competitive advantage, and teachers, as the most important human resources, should be highly valued. Especially in the fierce competition with government colleges, the competition for talents will intensify day by day. The government colleges and institutions have more generous compensation packages, more complete medical care and pension systems, more relaxed working conditions, and more humanized management, etc., which intrigues talents into flowing there. The turnover intention among teachers in private higher vocational colleges in China remains a pressing issue, necessitating an investigation into the factors influencing turnover intention and the potential consequences it has on institutional effectiveness and educational quality. By identifying the key factors that contribute to turnover intention, educational institutions can implement targeted interventions and policies to mitigate turnover rates and create a supportive environment that enhances teacher retention, job satisfaction, and overall educational outcomes.

Teachers' turnover intention poses a significant challenge in private higher vocational colleges in China, impacting institutional stability, educational quality, and student outcomes. Understanding the underlying factors contributing to teachers' turnover intention is crucial for educational institutions to develop effective strategies that can mitigate turnover and retain talented teaching staff. It is from this level that the relevant discussion of this study is particularly urgent. Therefore, this problem needs to be given full attention, which factors affect teachers' intentions to leave PHVCs? What causes them to "flow out"? In an effort to cast light on the factors influencing teachers' turnover intention in these colleges in China, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with teachers with obvious turnover intentions in private higher vocational colleges in a certain district in China, focusing on four representative teachers (referred to as teachers W, X, Y, and Z).

## **2. Turnover and turnover intention**

In the fields of organizational behavior and human resource management, turnover and turnover intention are crucial concepts. Turnover refers to the voluntary or involuntary departure of employees from their current positions or organizations. Turnover is a broader term that includes both voluntary and involuntary separations, whereas turnover intention specifically focuses on employees' intent or desire to leave their current positions or organizations.

Understanding turnover and turnover intention is crucial for organizations, as they influence a number of factors, including employee morale, organizational culture, and financial resources (Tett & Meyer, 1993). High turnover rates can disrupt work processes, impede the transmission of knowledge, and increase recruitment and training

expenses. Low turnover rates, on the other hand, contribute to organizational stability, continuity, and long-term success (Thin, 2022).

Turnover intention of employees refers to the likelihood that an employee will leave his or her current job (Aboudahab, González, & Abdelsalam, 2022); it offers insight into employees' mindsets and their likelihood of leaving the organization in the near future (Lazzari, Alvarez, & Ruggieri, 2022). It is a precursor to actual turnover and provides organizations with an opportunity to address underlying issues and implement strategies to retain valuable employees (Smokrovi et al., 2022).

Factors influencing turnover intention can be multifaceted and vary by individuals and organizational contexts. According to the literatures, some common factors include job satisfaction (Raharjo, Praditya & Marhalinda, 2022; Tett & Meyer, 1993), compensation and benefits (Hidayah & Ananda, 2021; Raharjo, Praditya & Marhalinda, 2022), career opportunities (Hidayah & Ananda, 2021; Raharjo, Praditya & Marhalinda, 2022), social status (Liang & Zhou, 2019), work-life balance (Mulang, 2022; Sajuyigbe et al., 2022), organizational culture (Mulang, 2022; Tett & Meyer, 1993), leadership (Liu et al., 2013; Masood, Siddiqui, Lodhi, & Shahbaz, 2020), and employee engagement (Mulang, 2022; Oh, Jeong, Shin & Schweyer, 2023). Employees' personal circumstances (Mallin, Hancock, Pullins & Gammoh, 2022), such as career aspirations, personal growth, and life events, can also influence their turnover intentions.

Turnover intention has a substantial impact on organizations and their workforces; therefore, organizations should employ a variety of strategies to effectively manage it. These may include improving work conditions to increase job satisfaction, recognizing and rewarding employee contributions, offering opportunities for growth and development, cultivating supportive relationships and communication, and aligning employee goals with organizational objectives. By investigating the factors influencing attrition intention, organizations can implement targeted interventions to reduce turnover rates, retain valuable employees, and create a positive work environment that promotes employee satisfaction, engagement, and long-term organizational success.

### **3. Influencing factors of teachers' turnover intention**

#### **3.1 Compensation**

Compensation is a crucial motivator and determinant of teachers' job satisfaction, financial well-being, and overall perception of their worth in the workplace. The positive relationship between teacher compensation and job satisfaction has been emphasized. Appropriate and equitable compensation can contribute to greater job satisfaction, thereby reducing the intention of teachers to leave their positions (Chen, & Li, 2019; Wang & Zhang, 2020; Xu & Wang, 2022). Teachers' intention to leave a college can be affected by their perceptions of compensation relative to that of others (Xu & Wang, 2021). Comparing compensation to that of coworkers, professionals in other disciplines, or personal expectations can have an effect on turnover intent (Zhang & Hu, 2020). Teachers who perceive a significant disparity between their compensation and that of others may be more likely to contemplate leaving (Wang & Zhang, 2020).

The perception of fairness and equity in teacher compensation is crucial. Perceived inequities, such as gender or racial disparities, can increase intention to leave a job (Liu & Li, 2021). Transparent and equitable

compensation practices are essential for reducing turnover intention (Xu & Wang, 2021). Higher levels of compensation can cultivate a sense of loyalty and commitment to the organization, thereby reducing intention to leave (Yang & Chen, 2021).

In the sphere of education, teacher turnover is a persistent problem with significant implications for both teachers and educational institutions. Continuity of instruction is disrupted, student achievement is hindered, and recruitment and training costs are increased when there is a high teacher turnover rate. Compensation has been identified as one of the most important factors influencing turnover intention (Vizano, Sutawidjaya, & Endri, 2021). To attract, motivate, and retain high-quality teachers, adequate and equitable compensation, including salary, benefits, incentives, and non-financial factors, is essential (Zhou & Ma, 2022). Educational policymakers and administrators should carefully consider compensation strategies to address turnover concerns and to foster teachers' professional development, job satisfaction, and retention (Alifuddin & Widodo, 2021).

In recent years, with the rapid expansion of private higher vocational colleges in China, the school scale is also expanding, and the demand for full-time teachers is increasing year by year. However, it is generally difficult for private colleges to introduce excellent external teachers, and the turnover rate of internal excellent teachers is high. The reasons are mainly related to management system problems (Wang & Liu, 2020), imperfect talent introduction policies (Liu & Li, 2021), salary systems that cannot generate incentives (Li & Yu, 2019), basic salary and welfare guarantees that are far from the average level in society (Huang & Sun, 2020), and so on. Although there are many reasons, the long-term empirical research of Chinese scholars shows that the level of salary and the reasonableness of the salary system directly affect the enthusiasm, happiness, and loyalty of teachers. They are important benchmarks and direct manifestations of measuring teacher satisfaction and whether they can stimulate their initiative and creativity.

Private higher vocational education is a model of enterprise operation, and it lacks government funding and relies primarily on student tuition fees to operate. Compared with government colleges, they lack adequate financial resources and incentives for teachers, which has a negative impact on teacher retention. If they want to earn money from running colleges, they have to control the cost of running schools. Especially, due to the decline in the number of students in China, some private higher vocational colleges have encountered a crisis of student resources, tuition income has decreased significantly. Most of teachers do not foresee a future there, and it is completely normal for them to experience emotional exhaustion and the desire to turnover. They earn only half as much as those government college teachers and the disparity in income exists not only between government and private institutions, but also between private higher vocational colleges. "The main reason I am considering abandoning my job is because my compensation is too low, when comparing with other government vocational colleges, civil servants, and other government institutions, my compensation is almost too humiliating to mention" (Teacher W). "My intention to leave is due to the compensation, especially the low compensation of young teachers, which is relatively low in the same field, and the heavy workload..." (Teacher X).

In a secular society, the economic status of practitioners is primarily determined by the income level of their profession. The only source of income for teachers at private higher vocational colleges is wages, which are depleted by housing loan repayments, family support, and other expenses. When discussing the issue of low income, they would naturally draw parallels to government college teachers, civil servants, and other

government employees. In general, they believe that their contributions are not proportional to their returns, and some teachers exhibit disappointment, exhaustion, and rage. "I've worked here for nearly ten years, and I've done a lot of work and worked very hard, but I only make a small amount of money" (Teacher W). "It is merely a maxim that teachers' compensation should not be lower than that of civil servants. There are still significant pay differences between them" (Teacher Y).

There are also significant issues with the compensation incentive system. The majority of respondents believe that the current performance evaluation system lacks fairness and does not motivate teachers. "The performance evaluation is ineffective and unfair for teachers, the performance evaluation plan should be revised, and an evaluation system that can truly motivate teachers should be developed" (Teacher X). In addition, "the existing compensation distribution system favors teachers with higher academic credentials and professional titles. Teachers with no or modest professional titles are paid less in base salary, variable salary, and extra-class fees. The workload is the same, but the pay is significantly less" (Teacher X). Clearly, it is unjust to use professional title and educational background to determine teachers' compensation level and whether they are outstanding or not. The issue of future pensions is also a primary concern among them. "The social insurance college purchase for us is the business insurance purchased on the minimum base, and no other commercial insurance is provided. I hope that the college can address everyone's concerns after retiring" (Teacher W).

From the above-mentioned literature analysis, it can be seen that adequate and competitive compensation packages, as well as alluring benefits, play a crucial role in reducing teachers' turnover intention. And also, it can be drawn from the interview that teachers in private higher vocational colleges are dissatisfied with their current compensation and economic situation, which makes them dissatisfied with the status quo and unable to teach with peace of mind in these colleges. This is a significant factor in their intention to turnover. Therefore, compensation is a crucial factor that influence teachers' turnover intention in private higher vocational colleges in China, and ensuring fair and equitable compensation practices can increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment, thereby contributing to the retention of teachers.

### **3.2 Social status**

Liang & Zhou (2019) define social status as the relative prestige, recognition, and esteem associated with a person's position in society. Understanding how social status influences turnover intention can help educational institutions develop targeted strategies to increase teacher retention and foster a supportive, gratifying work environment. The perceived social status of teachers within the organization has a significant effect on their intention to leave. Those who feel valued, acknowledged, and respected are more likely to be committed to their roles and the institution, thereby decreasing their intention to leave (Liu & Zhang, 2020). The extent to which teachers identify with their professional roles and perceive teaching as a socially valued profession can influence their intention to leave the profession. Higher levels of social status associated with teaching may reduce teachers' turnover intention (Yang & Wang, 2019).

The relationship between teachers' perceptions of leadership and their social status influences their intention to leave the profession. A supportive and inclusive leadership that values the contributions of teachers raises their social standing and decreases their intention to leave the profession (Chen, J. P, Cheng, H. Y & Chen, Y., 2023). Teachers' social status within an organization is influenced by their relationships and interactions with

colleagues. Positive peer relationships and collaboration contribute to a sense of belonging and can positively influence turnover intention (Zhu, J.Y., 2020). Opportunities for career growth and professional advancement affect teachers' perceptions of their social standing. Institutions that provide teachers with opportunities for advancement and acknowledge their achievements are more likely to retain their teaching personnel (Wang X.J.,2020).Teachers' perceptions of their social status within an organization can be affected by their compensation and benefits. Equal and competitive compensation practices contribute to teachers' feelings of worth and job satisfaction (Chen, J., 2022). The work environment, including organizational culture and support systems, plays a crucial role in determining the social status of teachers. A positive and nurturing work environment can increase teachers' sense of status and decrease their intention to leave their positions (Liu, T., 2020).

In a rapidly changing social environment, the social function of knowledge has been weakened, the social status of knowledge producers has been virtually diminished, and their right to make their voice in society has been weakened, knowledge is powerless is becoming the consensus among the intellectuals. Therefore, social status has become an important professional factor for them to consider. In addition, many teachers are stigmatized as "Zhuanjia" and "Jiaoshou", which affects the group image of the majority of teachers to some extent. "I used to have a sense of dignity whenever I mentioned my career to others, but now whenever I mention my career, people always look at me with strange eyes" (Teacher Y).

Hu (1944) proposed that face represents a reputation that is widely valued in China, which has been promoted step by step in the course of life. In the minds of the majority of Chinese, face signifies social status. Face is a sociological concept typically associated with a person's dignity and prestige in social interactions. Teachers in private higher vocational colleges possess all the characteristics of secular social creatures. According to their perspective, the social status of higher vocational college teachers, particularly private higher vocational teachers, is lower than that of numerous other industries in society. "In a variety of social contexts, a great number of individuals have vastly different attitudes (existences) toward teachers, wealthy people, and officials. Sometimes they regard teachers with indifference, and when they encounter officials, they nod and bow as if we are beneath them" (Teacher W). "When we gather together with relatives and friends, the rich ones are purse-proud, and they have a distinctive face. As a teacher, a private higher vocational college teacher, I am low in pocket, have no face" (Teacher Z).

The social status of teachers in private higher vocational college is low. It is widely held that teaching is a sacred and virtuous profession that should be respected and acknowledged by society. However, in China, the social status of teachers is closely tied to the popularity of the colleges in which they work, that is, teachers in 985&211 colleges enjoy the highest social status, followed by the second-class university, then the third-class university, the higher vocational college teachers have the lowest the social status, and the private higher vocational college teachers are at the bottom of the pyramid. "It is commonly believed that private higher vocational colleges are feeder institutions for government colleges or universities and that their students are inferior students who failed the college entrance exam and were denied admission to government universities" (Teacher X). "I came here after I graduated from college, I thought it was to be a great job, but the reality is the opposite, I was constantly discriminated against. Students' parents despise you, and students also scorn you, they think that you are not an excellent, both of them think you must not be particularly good, or why don't you go to a government college" (Teacher W).

From the above-mentioned literature analysis, it can be seen that adequate and competitive compensation packages, as well as alluring benefits, play a crucial role in reducing teachers' turnover intention. And also, it can be drawn from the interview that teachers in private higher vocational colleges are dissatisfied with their current compensation and economic situation, which makes them dissatisfied with the status quo and unable to teach with peace of mind in these colleges. This is a significant factor in their intention to turnover. Therefore, compensation is a crucial factor that influence teachers' turnover intention in private higher vocational colleges in China, and ensuring fair and equitable compensation practices can increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment, thereby contributing to the retention of teachers.

The aforementioned literature review demonstrates that teachers' perceptions of their social status within the organization are strongly associated with their job satisfaction, commitment, and intention to stay. The perceived social status of teachers is affected by collegial relationships, leadership support, opportunities for development, compensation practices, and the overall work environment. In addition, the interview suggests that private higher vocational college teachers are dissatisfied with their current social status and social recognition.

Therefore, to encourage teacher retention, private higher vocational colleges should prioritize the creation of a supportive and inclusive work environment that values and recognizes the contributions of teachers. Leadership practices that cultivate a sense of social status among teaching staff and provide opportunities for career advancement are essential for reducing the likelihood of teacher turnover. In addition, equitable compensation practices can improve teachers' perceptions of their social status and contribute to their job satisfaction and institution loyalty.

### **3.3 Occupational stress**

Occupational stress is psychological stress caused by a person's occupation. According to the World Health Organization, occupational stress can occur when employees do not feel supported by their supervisors or colleagues, have little control over their work, or believe their efforts are not rewarded proportionally. Because stressful workplace conditions are related to employees' emotional health, physical health, and job performance (Sulsky & Smith, 2005), both employees and employers are concerned about occupational stress. High levels of stress or distress result in worker dissatisfaction and loss of spirit (Griffin & Knight, 1990), lack of workplace harmony, decreased productivity, and employee turnover (Barber, Dunham, & Formanan, 1992).

Occupational stress has been a major concern in the teaching profession, affecting teachers' job satisfaction, mental health, and well-being as a whole (Nazari & Alizadeh, 2021). High levels of occupational stress can increase the likelihood that teachers will leave their positions, posing challenges to the stability and quality of education in private higher vocational colleges in China (Wang & Zhang, 2020). Numerous factors, including heavy workloads, time pressure, role ambiguity, lack of resources, interpersonal conflicts, and limited career development opportunities, contribute to occupational stress among instructors in private higher vocational colleges (Yang & Wang, 2019). Higher levels of occupational stress are associated with increased intentions to leave the profession or switch to other institutions, as demonstrated by numerous studies (Liu & Li, 2021; Chen & Wang, 2021; Wang & Zhang, 2020; Yang & Wang, 2019; Zhang & Hu, 2020; Zhang & Liu, 2022).

The operating system of private higher vocational colleges tends to be more “enterprise-oriented” than that of government universities or colleges, and the social impact and welfare protection are imperfect. Due to their perception of insecurity at work, teachers are subject to greater work pressure. These work constraints have a significant impact on the physical and mental development of teachers, as well as their work, life, and life.

“We have to do a lot of work every day, we even don’t have time to chill out or take time out. If we always work for such a long time, the pressure will increase and we could not be able to bear it” (Teacher Z). “I am an ordinary full-time teacher, I have sacrificed almost all holidays in the past two years, and my daily work schedule is full. Apart from teaching, I have to spare some time to make preparations, make students’ papers, apply for research topic, attend the academic meetings on the weekends or during the holidays. I even don’t have to look after my baby and parents.” (Teacher Y).

With the expansion of higher vocational education and the continuous reform of higher education in China, colleges have also put forward new requirements for teachers. The researchers mainly learn the workload of private higher vocational teachers from the aspects of heavy teaching tasks and high learning pressure. First of all, the interviewed teachers have many daily teaching tasks and their working hours are relatively long. “We work 8 hours a day. In fact, our actual working time is far more than 8 hours. The amount of labor we put in cannot be counted in detail” (Teacher X). In addition to the daily work of preparing lessons before class, teaching in class, and correcting homework after class, teachers sometimes undertake other tasks, such as attending teaching seminars and research projects, guiding students to participate in competitions, etc., and sometimes even have to deal with various inspections, these work arrangements increase their workload invisibly.

Private higher vocational college teachers are under intense pressure to participate in continuing education. On the one hand, due to the development of modern educational technology, new majors and courses are constantly being added in these colleges, and the teaching content is updated frequently, necessitating a constant replenishment of teachers’ knowledge and energy. “We simply cannot spare time to attend continuing education, unless we the regular workload can be reduced, but this is impossible, this is distressing” (Teacher W). “I feel so stressful that I even want to give up the job here. If I don’t attend the continuing education, I will face the risk of being fired, but I cannot spare some time for that” (Teachers Y).

Every year, due to the requirement of professional title promotion, the teacher also clarifies the scientific research tasks for the improvement of his own academic level, which invisibly increases his work pressure in scientific research. Since the scientific research competition is relatively fierce, and the intensity of the competition is gradually increasing, this will inevitably cause different degrees of work pressure on the teachers’ mind. In terms of academic qualifications, with the improvement of academic qualifications and the requirements for teachers in the construction of “double high” colleges, many teachers in private higher vocational colleges have begun to require doctoral degrees, and masters are also facing the risk of being eliminated. This undoubtedly caused a lot of trouble and pressure to teachers in addition to the heavy teaching work. “I have been teaching here for 10 years, and I feel hopeless. The competition in scientific research is too cruel, and the crisis of academic qualifications is also very strong. I am dog-tired, if there is good opportunity, I will quit the job here” (Teacher Z).



The literature review highlights the significant impact of occupational stress on teachers' intention to leave private higher vocational colleges in China. Job demands, work-life imbalance, lack of support and job control, role ambiguity, emotional exhaustion, and organizational climate are all significant determinants of teachers' intentions to abandon their jobs. From the interview, it is apparent that teachers in private higher vocational colleges are under greater pressure in terms of work intensity, continuing education, scientific research, and academic qualifications, which has had a negative impact on their physical and mental health, as well as the stability and long-term development of these colleges. So, it is not surprising that their turnover intention arises.

Therefore, in order to increase job satisfaction, well-being, and retention, educational institutions should prioritize reducing occupational stress among teaching staff. Strategies such as burden management, work-life balance initiatives, and the provision of support and resources can reduce occupational stress and increase teacher retention rates. Moreover, nurturing a supportive and empowering work environment is crucial for reducing occupational stress and enhancing teacher satisfaction and commitment. By addressing the fundamental causes of occupational stress, private higher vocational colleges in China can improve the overall job experience of their teaching staff, resulting in enhanced organizational performance and long-term success.

### **3.4 Leadership style**

Leadership style plays a crucial role in shaping the work environment, employee attitudes, and organizational outcomes. In the context of private higher vocational colleges in China, effective leadership is essential for creating a positive and supportive culture that fosters employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention. Understanding how different leadership styles influence turnover intention is critical for educational institutions to develop strategies that promote teacher retention and organizational success.

Numerous studies have highlighted the positive impact of transformational leadership on reducing turnover intention (Ariyabuddhiphongs & Kahn, 2017; Alshebl, 2022; Park & Pierce, 2020; Pravichai & Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2018; Sobaih, Gharbi & Abu Elnasr, 2022; Diko & Saxena, 2023). Transformational leaders inspire and motivate employees, cultivate a sense of purpose and a shared vision, and provide opportunities for professional growth and development. Under transformational leaders, faculty and staff are more likely to manifest greater job satisfaction and commitment to the organization, resulting in decreased intention to leave. Transactional executives motivate employees with contingent rewards and performance management (Pitchayachananon & Anantasopon, 2019). This style may not be as effective for long-term retention if emotional support and personal attention are lacking (Ennis, Gong, and Okpozo, 2018). Laissez-faire leadership, which is characterized by a dearth of involvement and direction, has been consistently associated with increased intention to leave the organization. When employees feel unsupported, lack direction, and are faced with unclear expectations, their job satisfaction and commitment decrease, resulting in increased intentions to abandon the organization (Masood, Siddiqui, Lodhi, & Shahbaz, 2020). Gameda and Mandala (2002) note that servant leaders prioritize the needs and well-being of their employees, fostering a supportive and compassionate work environment. This leadership style is associated with a decreased likelihood of employee turnover, as employees feel valued and appreciated (Li & Xie, 2022). In attrition research, authentic leadership, characterized by self-awareness, transparency, and ethical behavior, has emerged as an important leadership style. Due to the trust and credibility established by their leaders, teachers and staff working under authentic leaders tend to exhibit higher job satisfaction and lower intention to leave (Hwang, Song, & Ko, 202).

The leadership style is crucial to the creation of an organization's working atmosphere, humanistic environment and team culture, and also has a great impact on the psychology and performance of its employees. Teachers in private higher vocational colleges long for fair and democratic leadership and management, however, they are full of complaints about the college's leadership style and management. "It is common to get advantage through string-pulling. If you don't have relations with the leaders, it will be difficult for you to secure advantages through influence. It is so unfair." (Teacher X). "In the annual college performance appraisal, human factors are still too common. If the leaders are not familiar with you, you don't even have the chance. Some teachers are not that good, but they rank among the best every year." (Teacher W)

The dictatorial style of work is common among the leaders in private higher vocational colleges, they count on their administrative power to govern the college and always exploits normal teachers' authority for their personal gains. "For many things in the college, such as the personal performance assessment, college construction, and many other things, the college does hold the staff representative meeting, but it is a formal democracy, the decision was already made leader's mind" (Teacher W). "Formalism is common, even though the assessment is anonymous, but as far as I know, before the scoring, the leader will do the 'work' secretly and tell you dos and don'ts" (Teacher Y). "Leadership is very important for the development of the college, but not all leaders are well-educated and have the expertise in certain field. They may actually know little about imparting knowledge and cultivating students" (Teacher X). "Leaders always use administrative coercion and orders to manage the college, and this definitely brings interference and confusion to college's education and teaching work" (Teacher Z).

The literature review demonstrates that transformational and authentic leadership styles have a positive effect on reducing turnover intention, whereas laissez-faire leadership is associated with an increase in turnover intention. Depending on the proportion of rewards and emotional support it offers, transactional leadership may have varied effects. Moreover, the emerging concept of servant leadership has the potential to increase employee satisfaction and retention in private higher vocational schools.

The interviews with the teachers also demonstrate that disappointing leadership style and management make teachers in private higher vocational colleges unable to work there happily. This is another big trigger for the enhancement of the turnover intention. Therefore, educational institutions should therefore emphasize the development and promotion of effective leadership practices that correspond with the needs and values of their employees. The development of transformational, authentic, and servant leadership competencies among college administrators and department heads can contribute to the overall success and sustainability of private higher vocational colleges in China by fostering a positive work environment that promotes employee well-being and reduces turnover intention.

### **3.5 Career development**

Career development is the continuous process of acquiring skills, knowledge, and experiences in order to advance one's career and attain one's professional objectives. It is the process of making decisions for long-term learning in order to align personal requirements of physical or psychological fulfillment with opportunities for career advancement (Driver et al., 1988). In the contexts of human resource management and organizational

behavior, career development and intention to leave are crucial concepts. Effective career development gives individuals a sense of purpose, advancement, and job satisfaction. It helps them develop their talents, enhances their marketability, and opens doors to new opportunities within their current organization or elsewhere (Hidayah & Ananda, 2021).

When employees experience low job satisfaction, limited growth opportunities, lack of recognition, or dissatisfaction with their career development opportunities, they may contemplate leaving their current job or organization (William & Riyanto, 2021). When organizations invest in the development and advancement of their employees, job satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty increase (Raharjo, Pradhan, and Marhalinda, 2021). Career development initiatives, such as training programs, mentoring, and promotion paths, increase employee job satisfaction and commitment to the organization, thereby decreasing their intention to depart (Wu & Liu, 2022). The perception of career advancement opportunities by employees has a significant impact on their intention to quit. When individuals believe they can advance their careers within an organization, they are more likely to be committed to their current positions, resulting in a decreased intention to leave (Hidayah & Ananda, 2021).

Neglecting career development can contribute to an increase in turnover intention as employees look elsewhere for opportunities for growth and advancement. In recent years, teachers' compensation, social standing, and working conditions have vastly improved, but the professional allure of teachers in private higher vocational colleges remains woefully insufficient. This is still not the profession of choice for the majority of college graduates, and even fewer aspire to and are prepared to teach at private higher vocational colleges. Even among teachers who have taught in private higher vocational colleges, the majority of them did not pursue the profession voluntarily, but rather due to parental pressure and employment pressure. They are susceptible to psychological gaps in comparison to their ideal high-income, powerful professions.

"I never thought of being a teacher in private higher vocational college, I wanted to be a civil servant, or work in a government college when I was in the university. But when I searched for the job, it was not so easy to find an ideal one, so I came here. This is not my dream, the job here is not what I want, I always think of to make a change" (Teacher W). "It was not my choice to come here to work. My parents asked me to be a teacher. They said it was relatively stable, less stressful, and had winter and summer vacations, but this is not the case. It is too difficult to be a teacher in private vocational college" (Teacher X).

Teachers in private higher vocational colleges have a grudge against "being a teacher in a private college". They once dreamed that they could get a so-called "iron job" through studying. "I like to work as a teacher, I have been studying hard to get into a government college. But the reality is cruel, after graduation, I still entered a private vocational college as a teacher, I'm not reconciled at all" (Teacher Y). "I have always had good academic performance, and I was admitted to a good university, but now I am a teacher in a private higher vocational college, and my career development is very hindered" (Teacher X). "Many of my classmates are now either managers in enterprises, or admitted to government institutions, and they are developing very well. I am not reconciled. I want to quit this job; I want to realize my career ideal" (Teacher W). Teachers who are not reconciled to teaching in private higher vocational colleges find it difficult to form an identity for teachers in private higher vocational colleges and a sense of belonging to the teaching profession at work. "I want to take being a teacher here as a 'springboard' for future development for the time being, and leave this college in the future"

(Teacher Y). “I plan to take a doctoral degree. The purpose is to change the current situation and be able to work in government institutions” (Teacher X).

When comparing their former ideal to their current status as “teachers in private vocational colleges”, teachers felt a profound sense of loss. Teachers in private higher vocational colleges who feel a sense of loss cannot teach in these institutions voluntarily, which is also a factor in their intention to turnover. In addition, teachers place a premium on their career advancement opportunities and the realization of their professional value. When teachers at private higher vocational colleges are pessimistic about their career development prospects and believe that policy preference cannot reflect their professional value, they will have the intention to leave.

Therefore, educational leaders in private higher vocational colleges should concentrate on designing comprehensive career development programs that are aligned with employees' aspirations and provide avenues for advancement. Private higher vocational colleges can attract and retain talented faculty and staff by investing in their professional development, thereby establishing a positive and dynamic learning environment for their students.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study illuminates the complexities of retaining qualified and talented faculty in the context of private higher vocational colleges in China. Through the literature analysis of multiple factors and the interview, this study provides valuable insights for educational leaders and policymakers who seek to develop effective strategies to reduce teacher turnover and improve teacher retention.

The findings indicate that several factors significantly influence teachers' turnover intention in private higher vocational colleges in China: adequate and competitive compensation packages, as well as alluring benefits, play a crucial role in reducing teachers' intention to leave their positions, ensuring fair and equitable compensation practices contributes to the retention of teachers. recognizing and appreciating teachers' efforts and contributions can cultivate a sense of belonging and commitment, negatively influencing their intention to leave the profession; managing teachers' workload and addressing occupational stress are crucial in reducing turnover intention; transformational and supportive leadership fosters a positive work environment, promoting job satisfaction and reducing turnover intention. When teachers perceive robust support from their leaders and the organization, they are more likely to remain devoted to their positions; providing teachers with career development programs, professional growth opportunities, and clear career advancement pathways increases their commitment to the organization. Educational institutions that invest in their teachers' professional development are more likely to retain them over the long term.

Overall, the study highlights the significance of a comprehensive and holistic approach to talent management in private higher vocational colleges in China. By addressing these factors collectively, educational institutions can create a supportive and gratifying work environment that improves teacher retention and, subsequently, the quality of education as a whole. It is essential to recognize, however, that the factors influencing the intention to leave an organization can vary based on individual differences and organizational contexts. Consequently, ongoing research and data analysis are required to adapt retention strategies to the changing requirements of teachers in China's private higher vocational colleges. As a result, this study provides a valuable foundation for

future research and practical recommendations aimed at creating a more engaging and supportive work environment for teachers, reducing turnover intention, and contributing to the long-term success and stability of private higher vocational colleges in China.

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