

## Factors Affecting Teachers' Work Motivation and Job Satisfaction in Wuxi China

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### ABSTRACT

Teachers' job satisfaction promotes the success of public schools and institutions across the country, and it is a critical component in determining their teaching abilities. As a result, it is critical for higher vocational colleges to prioritize and improve teacher job satisfaction. This study examined how salary, school atmosphere, and principal transformational leadership affect teachers' work satisfaction at public higher vocational colleges in order to ensure educational quality. The deductive method was chosen because it employed work satisfaction research models to analyze vocational teachers' job satisfaction. After reviewing the data from these educators, hypotheses were developed to investigate salary, school climate, transformational leadership in principals, job motivation, and teacher job satisfaction. This study used a positive paradigm to assess teachers' job happiness. The researcher will use SPSS and Amos to sort primary data from questionnaires she will design and send to Wuxi City higher vocational college professors. Participants from seven Wuxi public higher vocational institutions completed the questionnaire. This study addresses these concerns by focusing on significant stressors such as compensation, school climate availability, the nature of the principal's transformational leadership, and work motivation, all of which are critical for improving job satisfaction and, by extension, educational quality. This research focuses on three major factors: remuneration, school atmosphere, and principal transformational leadership. Furthermore, it analyzes the possible mediating function of work motivation in the relationship between these characteristics and teachers' job satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Job Satisfaction, Work Motivation, Compensation, School Climate, Pprincipal Transformational Leadership

### INTRODUCTION

Vocational education provides students with job-ready skills and specialized courses in a variety of fields, including manufacturing, services, agriculture, healthcare, and technology. As of 2022, there are 11,200 registered and operational vocational colleges in China, serving about 29.15 million students and supervised by either central ministries and agencies or local governments (People's Daily). This system is intended to provide students with industry-specific skills, and it frequently collaborates with businesses to ensure the curriculum meets industry objectives (Pavlova, 2014). Vocational education provides hands-on experience and theoretical learning by combining classroom instruction with real-world training, as Moore and Hickox (1999) stated, "in the contemporary world, a better educated and trained workforce is an indispensable prerequisite for any economy that wishes to compete at the level of high quality, value-added products" (p. 50). This viewpoint is especially

pertinent in China, where vocational education is an important component of the overall educational system, reflecting the country's strategic focus on building a skilled, adaptive, and competitive workforce.

As a city with a century-long history as a business and commerce hub, and renowned for its strong manufacturing sector, Wuxi not only has a tradition of education driving industrial prosperity and industry nurturing educational growth, but it also places a high value on the integration and symbiosis of vocational education with local economic and social development (Wu et al., 2022). Since the 1980s, vocational education in Wuxi has grown in tandem with local industry. In the new century, with the goal of cultivating a larger pool of highly skilled workers and practical abilities, Wuxi set out to develop a first-class regional vocational education centre and align with worldwide standards in order to become a technician powerhouse. With the implementation of the "Yangtze River Delta Regional Plan" in 2010, vocational education in Wuxi took on a new strategic role. In 2014, Wuxi established a leadership group for vocational education reform and development to actively implement the spirit of the National Vocational Education Work Conference, thereby boosting innovation and development in vocational education. Since 2015, the Wuxi Municipal Committee and Municipal Government have released a succession of essential documents. After years of reform and investigation, Wuxi has steadily built a sophisticated vocational education system that is integrated into local companies. It has been designated as a "Jiangsu Province Innovation and Development Experimental Zone for Vocational Education," a "Comprehensive Reform Pilot City for Local Government Promotion of Higher Vocational Education Development," and one of the country's first modern apprenticeship pilot units (Wuxi Daily, Wuxi Education Bureau, 2019). According to Wu et al (2022), Wuxi currently has 10 higher vocational institutions (Table 1.1) and 31 secondary vocational schools (including technical schools), serving over 200,000 students and producing roughly 50,000 technical and skilled professionals per year. Wuxi has a graduate employment rate of more than 60%, with 1,031 high-skilled professionals per 10,000 employees.

Table 1 List of Higher Vocational Colleges in Wuxi

College	Type
Wuxi Institute of Technology	Public
Wuxi Vocational Institute of Commerce	Public
Wuxi City College of Vocational Technology	Public
Wuxi Vocational Institute of Art and Technology	Public
Wuxi Vocational College of Science and Technology	Public
Jiangsu Vocational College of Information Technology	Public
Jiangyin Polytechnic College	Public
Taihu Vocational and Technical College of Originality	Private
Wuxi South Ocean College	Private
Jiangnan Vocational College of Media Arts	Private

In recent years, Wuxi's higher vocational colleges have consistently prioritized serving the development of Wuxi's industries, creating employment, and emphasizing the quality, substance, characteristics, and innovative development of their institutions. These efforts have focused on improving the quality, content, characteristics, and innovative development of their institutions, emphasizing innovation-driven initiatives, strengthening their position as teaching centers, and developing students' comprehensive professional abilities and competitiveness in the labor market.

In 2021, the city's ten higher vocational colleges concentrated on 16 key industrial clusters in Wuxi, including the Internet of Things and high-end equipment, as well as four future industrial clusters such as the 5G industry and artificial intelligence, as well as modern service sectors such as cultural and creative services and trade services, dynamically adjusting their program offerings to include a total of 157 different majors (Sun & Gong, 2022). Furthermore, these universities actively participate

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in tailored talent development programs in partnership with local industry and businesses, acting as training and talent supply bases for a variety of sectors. They have taught and provided a significant number of competent individuals to local businesses. In conclusion, Wuxi's higher vocational colleges have established a mutually beneficial relationship with the city's industrial development, resulting in an effective pattern of industry-education integration and coordinated development.

Teachers in higher vocational colleges bear the enormous responsibility of developing senior technical professionals, and job happiness is critical in ensuring teacher stability and improving work effectiveness (Ruyue, 2023). Furthermore, instructors are the foundation of any educational system, functioning as role models that pupils actively emulate. However, there is a disturbing tendency of school instructors quitting their posts at a rapid pace, resulting in excessive staff turnover in many schools. Meanwhile, while the importance of teachers' labor in student accomplishment is well acknowledged, the topic of whether teachers are content with their working conditions is frequently disregarded (Hoque et al., 2023; Liang & Akiba, 2017).

Several reasons contribute to this issue, including insufficient administrative support and leadership, inadequate pay compensation, and low levels of job satisfaction (Purwanto, 2020; Chambers, 2010). According to national survey data, secondary vocational teachers report "basic satisfaction" levels, notably in terms of school working circumstances, educational environment, leaders' management methods, and teacher team construction. However, salary and teacher leadership continue to be areas of low satisfaction (Yin, 2022). Some academics believe that novice teachers in the twenty-first century have lower levels of participation in instructional activities (Manla, 2021; Mayer, 2006). As a result, there has been an increase in teacher absenteeism, with some educators investigating new career paths or reevaluating their commitment to the teaching profession, while others consider leaving completely (Low, Goh, & Tan, 2022; Joffres et al. 2001).

In light of economic and societal improvements, compensation growth for higher vocational college teachers does not keep up with inflation rates, resulting in lower-than-expected income levels and reduced job satisfaction (Dimichele, 2020; Masso et al., 2024). Salaries are the key source of financial stability for college professors, serving as the foundation for both survival and professional advancement. Furthermore, teacher salary is not competitive, prompting a large proportion of instructors to seek supplementary jobs. According to research findings, 62% of instructors work part-time to augment their inadequate earnings (Muwanguzi et al., 2021). Teachers' salaries are clearly lower than those of other professions. Teachers frequently experience weariness or explore opportunities that offer reduced pressure, more satisfaction, or higher compensation (Noori et al., 2024; Jackson, 2018).

A well-designed compensation structure can improve the quality of school instruction and teaching while also facilitating teachers' professional development. However, some teachers have expressed concerns about the current compensation mechanism, claiming that it does not generate enough motivation due to its limited reach among teachers, insufficient strength and impact, and inability to effect significant changes in the current state of affairs (Sudirman et al., 2021). Furthermore, for some insufficient operational policies, school leaders must establish a supportive systematic operating mechanism to meet policy needs (Karlsson et al., 2020; Berhanu, 2023). However, schools have yet to develop a systematic policy operation mechanism, and disparities in education administrators' grasp and knowledge of policies will have an impact on policy implementation timeliness (Arar et al., 2024).

Transformational leaders can promote an innovative culture while also inspiring and motivating their followers to accept unique educational ideas and techniques. However, there are some leaders who insist on sticking to their own opinions and dismissing fresh ideas proposed by other educators, causing instructors to be disappointed and diminishing their motivation to perform. (Schanke, 2022). The leaders' inability to keep up with societal demands stems from their adherence to outdated

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management methods and resistance to adopting innovative management concepts, which has resulted in significant dissatisfaction among teachers and a high employee turnover rate (Megheirkouni & Mejheirkouni, 2020).

According to the Ministry of Education, a substantial proportion of schools lack the contemporary facilities required for successful teaching and meeting the projected workforce demands. The number of campus assaults, confrontations, and disciplinary difficulties among teachers, students, and school administrators in vocational colleges has increased (Putriningsih et al., 2023; Moon et al., 2021). Recent observations and conversations in the educational community point to growing concerns over teacher work satisfaction in public higher vocational colleges, particularly in Wuxi (Shao, 2020; Wang, 2021). This study addresses these concerns by focusing on significant stressors such as compensation, school climate availability, the nature of the principal's transformational leadership, and work motivation, all of which are critical for improving job satisfaction and, by extension, educational quality. This research focuses on three major factors: remuneration, school atmosphere, and principal transformational leadership. It also looks into the potential mediating role of work motivation in the link between these parameters and teacher job satisfaction.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite extensive research into vocational education and its integration with the manufacturing sector, there are significant gaps in both empirical and theoretical literature. These limitations impede the creation of comprehensive methods to improve the effectiveness of vocational education in addressing the changing demands of the manufacturing industry, particularly in terms of teacher job satisfaction. While several studies have looked at the short-term effects of vocational education on skill development and employment, there has been little longitudinal research into graduates' long-term career paths. Understanding how vocational education affects long-term employment stability, professional advancement, and work satisfaction is critical for educational program improvement (Dougherty & Ecton, 2021). There is a theoretical vacuum in understanding how policy changes affect teacher job satisfaction over time (Granziera & Martin, 2021; Li & Li, 2019). Analyzing the influence of policies such as funding allocations, leadership, and work atmosphere via a theoretical lens can help policymakers devise more effective ways to improve teacher job satisfaction and motivation (Smith, 2018).

As previously stated, the proposed conceptual framework is based on the findings of a complete investigation, which are shown in the table below. The conceptual framework describes in detail the potential links between these seven constructs. We verify these links by reviewing the relevant literature (see Chapter 2) and then seek a theoretical foundation for creating the connection frame structure hypothesis. These relationships are designed as a series of research hypotheses to address the research topic. Here is a basic summary of how these hypotheses developed.

### *The Linkage between Compensation and Work Motivation*

Some experts believe that there is a link between compensation and work motivation. For example, Tumi, Hasan, and Khalid (2022) found that wage and compensation elements have a considerable impact on employee motivation. They suggested that corporations create suitable compensation systems (including monetary and non-monetary incentives) in organizational matters to promote company performance. Kuvaas (2006) investigates the impact of various types and levels of compensation administration on employee motivation. Their findings indicate that base wage levels were positively correlated with self-reported work performance and emotional commitment to the unit, but not with bonus levels. Thibault Landry, Schweyer, and Whillans (2017) discuss the relevance of workplace incentives and recognition. They propose that firms should shift their focus away from wage and traditional cash awards and toward non-monetary, physical, and intangible rewards and recognition metrics. Mahathir, Matondang, and Wibowo (2020) discovered that financial pay has a

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considerable impact on employees' job motivation. Non-economic rewards have an impact on job motivation, but it is not considerable. Ghazanfar, Chuanmin, Khan, and Bashir (2011) discovered that income satisfaction can influence work motivation.

Therefore, the hypothesis below is put forward targeting to prove the relationships.

H1: There is a statistically crucial influence of compensation on work motivation at higher vocational colleges in Wuxi, China.

### ***The Linkage between School Climate and Work Motivation***

Researchers have completed the connected topic and obtained their findings. Melecio & Vinitwatanakhun (2022) found a moderate positive correlation ( $r = .559$ ,  $p < .05$ ) between teachers' perception of school atmosphere and their level of work motivation at Samutprakarn Assumption College in Thailand. Extrinsic motivation was also moderate (3.42). Pinkas (2022) explores the relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' work motivation. The findings show that principals' leadership styles have both direct and indirect effects on teachers' motivation levels by influencing their impression of the school environment. Similarity, Ansar, Sumar, and Laiya (2023) investigated the relationship between the working environment and employees' work motivation in SMP schools in Gorontalo City, and the findings show a significant correlation between the two, with correlation coefficients of 0.221 and 22.1%, respectively. Davulcu, Kuluma, and Kamaz (2021) investigated the relationship between motivation levels of elementary, middle, and high school teachers, and their findings demonstrated a positive and relatively substantial correlation between school climate and teacher motivation ( $r = 0.371$ ). As a result, the following hypothesis is proposed with the goal of demonstrating the relationship between the two variables.

H2. There is a statistically vital impact of teacher qualification on teacher quality at higher vocational colleges in Wuxi city, China.

### ***The Linkage between Principal Transformational Leadership and Work Motivation***

Adhi and Aima (2021) investigate and analyze the impact of transformational leadership and compensation on incentives and their role in organizational performance, with the findings indicating that transformational leadership and compensation have a significant positive impact on improving employee motivation. Similarly, Lee and Kuo (2019) investigate the relationship between transformational leadership of primary school principals and teachers' work motivation, demonstrating that transformational leadership of primary school principals is positively correlated with teacher motivation, and that the dimensions of transformational leadership of primary school principals have predictive power on teachers' overall work motivation. Serin & Akkaya (2020), Hyseni Duraku & Hoxha (2021), Novita, Sulaiman & Rizali (2022), and Udin et al. (2023) investigate the potential relationship between transformational leadership and teacher motivation, and demonstrate that transformational leadership has a direct and significant influence on organizational learning culture, intrinsic work motivation, and employee performance. As a result, the following hypothesis is presented.

H3: There is a statistically significant effect of Principal Transformational Leadership on work motivation at higher vocational colleges in Wuxi city, China.

### ***The Linkage between Work Motivation and Job Satisfaction***

Some academics are quite interested in the relationship between work motivation and job happiness, and the majority of them find significant relationships. Abdullah et al. (2024) identify the elements that influence employee job satisfaction and provide a theoretical framework and research model. The results show that work motivation has a substantial effect on employee job satisfaction. Aryawan et al. (2024) research the possible impact of work motivation on the job satisfaction of junior high school teachers in Denpasar, Indonesia, and their findings show that work motivation has a significant positive effect on teacher job satisfaction. Denny, Moertono, and Marwan (2024), Idris and Hidayat (2024), Fang (2024), and Haryono and Sulisty (2020) conducted study on the same topic, and the findings all suggest that work motivation has a major impact on teacher job satisfaction. Furthermore,

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Louis et al. (2024) investigated the impact of incentive methods on job satisfaction and discovered that promotion tactics greatly influenced police motivation. As such, Hypothesis 4 is presented below.

H4: There is a statistically significant impact of work motivation on job satisfaction at higher vocational colleges in Wuxi city, China.

#### ***The Linkage between Compensation and Job Satisfaction***

According to the literature review, some researchers have investigated the relationship between compensation and work satisfaction. Sriadmitum's (2023) study looks at how salary affects work satisfaction among instructors in Tandun and Ujung Batu sub-district State high schools. The findings show that remuneration has no meaningful influence on job satisfaction. However, researchers such as Komara (2023) have discovered that remuneration has a favorable impact on job satisfaction. Serang et al. (2023) found that remuneration has a favorable and significant effect on job satisfaction. Usu et al.'s (2024) study found that remuneration had a favorable and significant impact on job satisfaction. Meanwhile, Sari, Lanin, and Frinaldi's (2024) study examines the impact of compensation on employees' job loyalty within the government sector in Padang City and concludes that salary has a strong beneficial influence on employees' job loyalty.

H5: There is a statistically crucial impact of compensation on job satisfaction at higher vocational colleges in Wuxi city, China.

#### ***The Linkage between School Climate and Job Satisfaction***

Empirical research have looked at the relationship between school climate and work satisfaction. The study of Zakariya (2020) attempts to verify and cross-validate the direct/indirect impact model of school climate and teacher self-efficacy on job happiness, with the findings indicating that school atmosphere has a strong direct impact on job satisfaction. Fang and Qi (2023) investigated the relationship between vocational education and teacher job satisfaction by combining the external factor of school climate. Their findings show that school atmosphere significantly predicts teachers' job satisfaction, with teacher self-efficacy acting as a significant mediating factor between school climate and teacher satisfaction. Similarly, Nalipay (2023) seeks to identify the key factors of school climate that have a significant impact on teachers' job satisfaction and overall happiness. A cross-sectional analysis reveals that indicators of school climate at both the teacher and school levels play an important role in predicting teachers' job satisfaction and well-being. In addition, Zhou et al. (2024) investigated how teachers' perceptions of school atmosphere affect their job satisfaction. The results suggest that a positive school environment has a strong direct impact on STEM instructors' job satisfaction. As a result, hypothesis 6 is put forward.

H6: There is a statistically important effect of school climate on job satisfaction at higher vocational colleges in Wuxi city, China.

#### ***The Linkage between Principal Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction***

Empirical research have looked into the relationship between Principal Transformational Leadership and job satisfaction. Sulaiman et al. (2021) investigate the direct and indirect correlations between transformational leadership and job satisfaction, and their findings show that transformational leadership by principals has a negative correlation with job happiness. Other researchers, however, have found the opposite. Hidayat et al. (2023) investigated the impact of principals' transformational leadership roles on teacher job satisfaction, and their findings revealed that maximizing principals' transformational leadership roles considerably increased teachers' work satisfaction levels. Purwanto and Sulaiman (2023) found similar results when examining the relationship between transformative leadership and teacher job satisfaction. In addition, Chinese researchers Zhang, Huang, and Xu (2022) and Changlong (2024) discovered that transformational leadership had a significant impact on teachers' job satisfaction. In 2024, Sezgin et al. (2024) and Asbari (2024) demonstrated that transformative leadership had both direct and indirect positive effects on teacher satisfaction. Thus, Hypothesis 6 is as follows:

H7: There is a statistically important effect of Principal Transformational Leadership on job satisfaction at higher vocational colleges in Wuxi city, China.

### ***The Linkage of the Mediating Effect of Work Motivation on the relationship among the Independent Variables and Job Satisfaction***

Misnawati, Dalle, and Suriansyah (2020) investigate the impact of school atmosphere on teacher performance, using work motivation as a mediating variable. The findings indicate that the school environment mediates the relationship between teacher job satisfaction and overall performance. Efendi, Rifa'i, Bahrin, Milla, and Suharmi (2020) investigate the mediating role of work motivation in the impact of work discipline and pay on employee performance, and their findings indicate that work motivation also serves as an intermediate in the relationship between wage and employee performance. Ermawati and Suwito's (2020) study aims to investigate the impacts of financial and non-financial compensation on employee performance in private health clinics, using motivation as a mediating variable. Similarly, Laras, Jatmiko, Susanti, and Susiati's (2021) study investigates the impact of the work environment and compensation on work motivation and police performance, concluding that work motivation is an important intermediary factor between the work environment, compensation, and police performance. Candradewi & Dewi (2019), Riatmaja and Wibaawanto (2022), Novita, Sulaiman & Rizali (2022), Ali & Saleh (2021), Suriansyah & Hadi's (2022), and Zubaidah, Haryono & Udin (2021) all found that teacher job motivation was a mediating variable on job satisfaction. Thus, hypotheses 8, 9, and 10 are proposed as follows:

H8: There is a mediating effect of work motivation in the relationship between compensation and job satisfaction at higher vocational colleges in Wuxi city, China.

H9: There is a mediating effect of work motivation in the relationship between school climate and job satisfaction at higher vocational colleges in Wuxi city, China.

H10: There is a mediating effect of work motivation in the relationship between Principal Transformational Leadership and job satisfaction at higher vocational colleges in Wuxi city, China.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Figure 1 below shows how do the three independent variables affect the role of healthcare services utilization and regulatory variables.

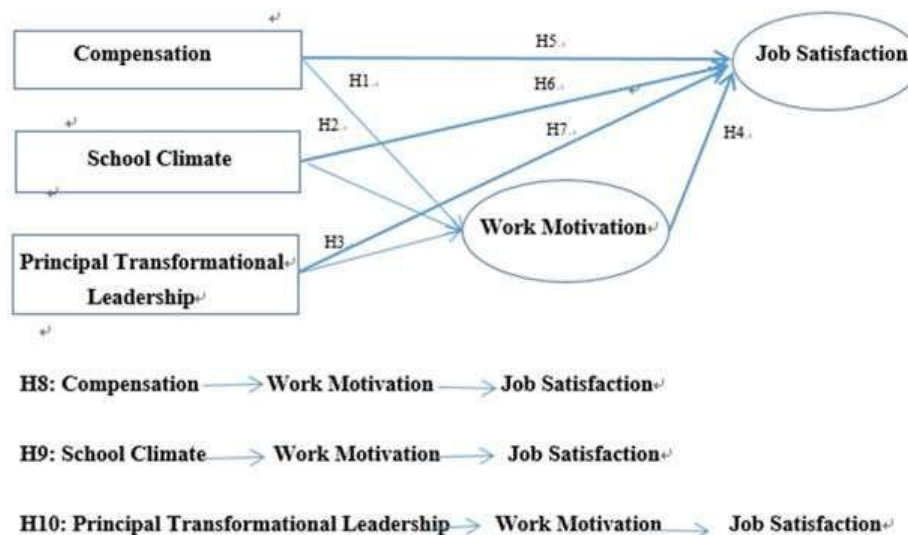


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 above shows that the independent factors are salary, school climate, and Principal Transformational Leadership. Job satisfaction is the dependent variable, whereas work motivation



serves as a mediating variable. According to the literature review in the chapter, this study develops a conceptual framework for the investigation of factors impacting instructors' job satisfaction at higher vocational colleges.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, a deductive approach was used since it relied on existing theories and models in work satisfaction research to analyze factors influencing job satisfaction among vocational teachers. After examining the data collected from these teachers, hypotheses were developed to assess the correlations between compensation, school atmosphere, transformational leadership of principals, job motivation, and teacher satisfaction. The positive paradigm is used in this study to investigate the elements influencing teachers' job happiness. The primary data will come from questionnaires prepared by the researcher and gathered from teachers at higher vocational colleges in Wuxi, China, then sorted using SPSS and Amos. The questionnaire's participants come from seven public higher vocational institutions in Wuxi, China. According to the college's official website, the researcher reached a conclusion about the population among the seven public teacher populations. See Table 2 below. It can be noted that the study population in this research is approximately 4386, which signifies an abundance of the research population for the researcher to collect the data to examine the link stated.

Table 2 The combination of the population

Item	College	Population	Source
1	Wuxi Institute of Technology	744	<a href="https://rsc.wxit.edu.cn/3156/list.htm">https://rsc.wxit.edu.cn/3156/list.htm</a>
2	Wuxi Vocational Institute of Commerce	726	<a href="https://www.tech.net.cn/column_rcpy/art.aspx?id=24182&amp;type=2">https://www.tech.net.cn/column_rcpy/art.aspx?id=24182&amp;type=2</a>
3	Wuxi City College of Vocational Technology	500	<a href="https://apps.eol.cn/2156/article/165057.html">https://apps.eol.cn/2156/article/165057.html</a>
4	Wuxi Vocational Institute of Art and Technology	476	<a href="https://www.wxgyxy.cn/info/2371/99871.htm">https://www.wxgyxy.cn/info/2371/99871.htm</a>
5	Wuxi Vocational College of Science and Technology	917	<a href="https://www.wxstc.cn/info/1004/4958.htm">https://www.wxstc.cn/info/1004/4958.htm</a>
6	Jiangsu Vocational College of Information Technology	682	<a href="https://www.jsit.edu.cn/sxgk/xyjj.htm">https://www.jsit.edu.cn/sxgk/xyjj.htm</a>
7	Jiangyin Polytechnic College	341	<a href="https://www.jypc.edu.cn/xygk/xyjj.htm">https://www.jypc.edu.cn/xygk/xyjj.htm</a>
Total		4386	

The teachers from seven public higher vocational institutions in Wuxi, China, served as the study's units of analysis. Teachers from seven public vocational colleges in Wuxi city are the ones who educate, receive salary, experience the school climate, and recognize the various styles of principle leadership. Because the population in this study is drawn from seven public vocational colleges and the study unit is the teacher, each teacher has an equal chance of being chosen as a respondent to the questionnaire. As a result, this study uses the sampling design's probability. There are a total of 4386



in-service teachers at Wuxi's seven public higher vocational colleges. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the sample size is 354. Data was collected via a questionnaire. The questionnaire was carefully constructed to determine the elements impacting instructors' job satisfaction at seven public vocational colleges in Wuxi city. The questionnaire instrument used in the current study is divided into two portions. The first component collects demographic information from respondents, such as their age, gender, professional title, job experience, and working unit. The second portion contains three axes: The research variables indicated in the independent variables are salary, school climate, and principal transformational leadership. The variables reflected in the dependent variables include job satisfaction, followed by the mediating variable, which is work motivation.

Table 3 Reliability of Questionnaire

Construct	Variables	No of Items	of Chronbach's Alpha >0.7	Decision
Independence variables	Compensation	8	0.921	Reliable
	School Climate	7	0.875	Reliable
	Principal Transformational Leadership	9	0.884	Reliable
Mediating Variable	Work Motivation	7	0.786	Reliable
Dependence Variable	Job Satisfaction	8	0.830	Reliable

## Findings

It is critical to quantify the factor loading in order to assess the dependability of each individual item. Ringle et al. (2023) use a threshold value of 0.7 or above for each item's loading to determine its reliability. Furthermore, both the Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability scores must be at least 0.7. In addition, calculating the average variance extracted (AVE) entails estimating the mean value of the squared loadings of the items associated with the construct. It is a widely used measure for assessing convergent validity. Ringle et al. (2023) define a construct as explaining more than half of the variability in its constituents if its AVE score is 0.5 or higher. Table 1 shows that the Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability values are greater than 0.7, and the AVE values are greater than 5%. This has shown the theories' convergent validity.

The Fornell-Larcker criterion, cross loadings, and heterotrait-monotrait ratio must all be evaluated to determine the test's discriminant validity. The Fornell-Larcker criterion requires that the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each variable be greater than the correlation between the latent variables. According to the results of our analysis, this requirement is met, as indicated in Table 4. When it comes to cross loadings, it is expected that the loading of each indicator will be greater than the loadings of the indicators of the variables associated with it. Table 2 clearly shows that the cross loading criteria have been met (Ringle et al., 2023). It is critical to ensure that the number is less than 0.85 in order to verify the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) is correct. Based on the data shown in Table 3, it is possible to conclude that the HTMT criterion has been met, indicating that discriminant validity has been demonstrated.

Table 4 CR, CA and AVE

	Cronbach's Alpha	$\rho_A$	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Compensation	0.957	0.958	0.966	0.752
School Climate	0.963	0.963	0.971	0.770
Principal Transformational Leadership	0.947	0.950	0.960	0.726
Work Motivation	0.966	0.966	0.974	0.782
Job Satisfaction	0.957	0.959	0.967	0.752

Tumi, Hasan, and Khalid (2022) found that pay and compensation factors motivate workers. Corporate pay schemes should include monetary and non-monetary incentives to boost firm performance, they advised. Compensation administration kinds and levels affect employee motivation, according to Kuvaas (2006). They found that base wage levels were linked with self-reported work performance and emotional commitment to the unit, but not bonuses. According to Thibault Landry, Schweyer, and Whillans (2017), workplace incentives and recognition matter. They suggest employers prioritize non-monetary, physical, and intangible rewards and recognition criteria over wage and cash awards. Mahathir, Matondang, and Wibowo (2020) found that financial remuneration motivates workers. Non-economic benefits motivate workers some, but not much. Income satisfaction affects work motivation, according to Ghazanfar, Chuanmin, Khan, and Bashir (2011).

Researchers finished the topic and found results. Melecio & Vinitwatanakhun (2022) discovered a moderate positive connection ( $r = .559$ ,  $p < .05$ ) between instructors' impression of school atmosphere and work motivation at Samutprakarn Assumption College in Thailand. Also moderate was extrinsic motivation (3.42). Pinkas (2022) examines principal leadership styles and teacher motivation. The findings reveal that administrators' leadership styles directly and indirectly affect teachers' motivation by influencing their school environment perception. Similarity, Ansar, Sumar, and Laiya (2023) found a substantial link between the working environment and employees' work motivation at SMP schools in Gorontalo City, with coefficients of 0.221 and 22.1%. Davulcu, Kuluma, and Kamaz (2021) found a favorable and significant link between school climate and elementary, middle, and high school teacher motivation ( $r = 0.371$ ). Therefore, the following hypothesis is given to show the relationship between the two variables.

Table 5 Discriminant Validity

	Compensation	School Climate	Principal Transformational Leadership	Work Motivation	Job Satisfaction
Compensation	0.823				
School Climate	0.905	0.833			
Principal Transformational Leadership	0.962	0.880	0.809		
Work Motivation	0.830	0.903	0.843	0.839	
Job Satisfaction	0.869	0.944	0.893	0.925	0.823

Adhi and Aima (2021) study how transformational leadership and compensation affect incentives and organizational performance and find that they boost employee motivation. Similarly, Lee and Kuo (2019) show that transformational leadership of primary school principals positively correlates with teacher motivation and that its dimensions predict teachers' overall work motivation. Serin & Akkaya (2020), Hyseni Duraku & Hoxha (2021), Novita, Sulaiman & Rizali (2022), and Udin et al. (2023) show that transformational leadership directly affects organizational learning culture, intrinsic work motivation, and employee performance.

Most academics who study work motivation and job satisfaction find significant links. Abdullah et al. (2024) analyze employee job satisfaction and propose a theoretical framework and research model. Results reveal that work motivation significantly impacts employee job satisfaction. Aryawan et al. (2024) found that work motivation positively affects junior high school teachers' job satisfaction in Denpasar, Indonesia. Denny, Moertono, and Marwan (2024), Idris and Hidayat (2024), Fang (2024), and Haryono and Sulisty (2020) found that work motivation affects teacher job satisfaction. Louis et al. (2024) found that promotion practices considerably influenced police motivation and job satisfaction.

Table 6 HTMT

	Compensation	School Climate	Principal Transformational Leadership	Work Motivation	Job Satisfaction
Compensation					
School Climate	0.843				
Principal Transformational Leadership	0.710	0.820			
Work Motivation	0.864	0.736	0.881		
Job Satisfaction	0.907	0.982	0.739	0.861	

Some researchers have studied remuneration and work satisfaction, according to the literature review. Sriadmitum's (2023) study examines how income impacts Tandun and Ujung Batu high school teachers' job happiness. We found no correlation between pay and work happiness. However, Komara (2023) found that pay improves job satisfaction. Serang et al. (2023) found that pay improves job satisfaction significantly. Usu et al. (2024) observed that pay improved job satisfaction significantly. Sari, Lanin, and Frinaldi's (2024) study on Padang City government employees' job loyalty finds that remuneration positively affects job loyalty.

School atmosphere and job happiness have been studied empirically. Zakariya (2020) verifies and cross-validates the direct/indirect impact model of school climate and teacher self-efficacy on job happiness and finds that school atmosphere strongly affects job satisfaction. School atmosphere was used by Fang and Qi (2023) to study vocational education and teacher job satisfaction. They found

that school climate predicts teachers' work satisfaction, with teacher self-efficacy mediating the relationship. Nalipay (2023) also tries to uncover school climate characteristics that affect teachers' job satisfaction and contentment. A cross-sectional analysis shows that teacher and school climate factors affect teachers' work satisfaction and well-being. In addition, Zhou et al. (2024) examined how school atmosphere affects teachers' job happiness. STEM professors' job satisfaction appears to be strongly correlated with a favorable school atmosphere.

**Table 7 Direct Relationship**

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV  )	P Values
Compensation -> Work Motivation	0.371	0.375	0.078	4.760	0.000
School Climate - > Work Motivation	0.330	0.332	0.077	4.278	0.000
Principal Transformational Leadership -> Work Motivation	0.285	0.280	0.068	4.205	0.000
Work Motivation -> Job Satisfaction	0.795	0.804	0.044	17.922	0.000

The first hypothesis suggested that compensation has a significant impact on work motivation. Table 7 shows a significant influence ( $\beta = 0.371$ ,  $t = 4.760$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, hypothesis 1 is confirmed. Hypothesis 2 suggested that school climate had a significant impact on work motivation. Table 7 shows a statistically significant finding ( $\beta = 0.303$ ,  $t = 4.278$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Hypothesis 3 shows a significant impact of Principal Transformational Leadership on Work Motivation, as indicated by the score ( $\beta = 0.285$ ,  $t = 4205$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Hypothesis 4 was statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.795$ ,  $t = 17.922$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that it is accepted. Work Motivation considerably improves Job Satisfaction.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV  )	P Values
Compensation -> Work Motivation -> Job Satisfaction	0.295	0.301	0.063	4.713	0.000
School Climate - > Work Motivation -> Job Satisfaction	0.263	0.267	0.064	4.080	0.000
Principal Transformational Leadership -> Work Motivation -> Job Satisfaction	0.227	0.225	0.057	3.970	0.000

The fifth hypothesis proposes that work motivation has a significant impact on the relationship between compensation and job satisfaction. Taking into account the facts given in Table 8, Hypothesis 5 was confirmed. This hypothesis had a score of  $\beta = 0.0295$ , a t-value of 4.713, and a p-value  $< 0.001$ . The sixth hypothesis proposed that Work Motivation plays an important role in moderating the relationship between School Climate and Job Satisfaction. Table 8 demonstrates a significant moderating relationship with the score ( $\beta = 0.263$ ,  $t = 4.080$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This supports the view that hypothesis 6 is valid. The seventh hypothesis proposes that work motivation has a significant influence on the relationship of Principal Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction. The data in Table 8 reveal a considerable mediating influence. The coefficient ( $\beta = 0.227$ ,  $t = 3.970$ , and  $p < 0.001$ ) indicates a substantial influence.

Principal Transformational Leadership and job happiness have been studied empirically. Sulaiman et al. (2021) found that principals' transformative leadership negatively affects job satisfaction. However, other investigations found the opposite. Hidayat et al. (2023) found that maximizing principals' transformational leadership roles significantly boosted teachers' job satisfaction. Purwanto and Sulaiman (2023) found comparable results on transformative leadership and teacher job satisfaction. Chinese academics Zhang, Huang, and Xu (2022) and Changlong (2024) found that transformational leadership increased teachers' job satisfaction. Sezgin et al. and Asbari (2024) found that transformative leadership improved teacher satisfaction directly and indirectly.

Work motivation mediates the effect of school atmosphere on teacher performance, according to Misnawati, Dalle, and Suriansyah (2020). The data show that school environment mediates teacher job satisfaction and performance. Efendi, Rifa'i, Bahrin, Milla, and Suharmi (2020) found that work motivation mediates the relationship between work discipline, pay, and employee performance. Ermawati and Suwito's (2020) study uses incentive to examine how financial and non-financial remuneration affect private health clinic employees' performance. Similarity, Laras, Jatmiko, Susanti, and Susiati's (2021) study examines how work environment and compensation affect police performance and finds that work motivation mediates this relationship. Teacher job motivation mediates job happiness

## CONCLUSION

Recent observations and discussions within the educational community suggest growing concerns regarding the job satisfaction of teachers in public higher vocational colleges, with specific attention

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to institutions like those in Wuxi. This research responds to these concerns by addressing significant stressors such as compensation, the availability of school climate, the nature of principal's transformational leadership, and the work motivation, all of which are crucial for enhancing job satisfaction and, by extension, the quality of education. Specifically, this research places a particular focus on three key factors: compensation, school climate, and principal transformational leadership. Additionally, it investigates the potential mediating role of the work motivation in the relationship between these factors and teachers' job satisfaction. Work motivation mediates the effect of school atmosphere on teacher performance, according to Misnawati, Dalle, and Suriansyah (2020). The data show that school environment mediates teacher job satisfaction and performance. Efendi, Rifa'i, Bahrin, Milla, and Suharmi (2020) found that work motivation mediates the relationship between work discipline, pay, and employee performance. Ermawati and Suwito's (2020) study uses incentive to examine how financial and non-financial remuneration affect private health clinic employees' performance. Similarly, Laras, Jatmiko, Susanti, and Susiati's (2021) study examines how work environment and compensation affect police performance and finds that work motivation mediates this relationship. Teacher job motivation mediates job happiness

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