

Influencing Factors and Coping Strategies of University Teachers' Psychological Stress

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Abstract: In the current social and economic environment, with the reform and development of universities and the use of advanced technology, university teachers have encountered different degrees of psychological pressure in work, life and family. Taking Hebei University of Engineering as an example, this paper analyzes the psychological stress factors of university teachers through literature research and teacher interviews, and concludes that professional title promotion and assessment, workload, interpersonal relationship, and family burden is the main influencing factor of the psychological stress of university teachers, and then proposes strategies to deal with the psychological stress of university teachers, including establishing a scientific and reasonable management mechanism and an effective incentive mechanism, improving the treatment of teachers, and establishing a good social support system. Improve teachers' self-psychological adjustment ability.

Keywords: University teachers, Psychological stress, Influencing factors, Coping strategies

1. Introduction

University teachers are mainly responsible for teaching, management, and scientific research, bear the major social responsibility of training useful talents for the country^[1], and are the backbone of implementing the strategy of rejuvenating the country through science and education. In the context of the information society, the work and life stress of university teachers is increasing^[2]. Many university teachers are in poor mental and physical state, fatigue, anxiety, and emotional tension are the typical manifestations of teachers' psychological stress^[3]. In addition to completing many teaching and scientific research tasks, they are also affected by stress factors such as professional title promotion, marriage and family, housing and medical treatment, and their overall feeling and evaluation of work and life are reduced, resulting in psychological stress^[4].

Stress is a certain relationship between a person and his environment, and the individual will evaluate whether these relationships have more resources than he has and may be harmful to his health^[5]. Psychological stress refers to an internal psychological process in which an individual experiences tension due to external events or stimuli, and its generation is the result of interaction between objective and subjective factors^[6]. This study believes that psychological stress refers to a comprehensive mental state of continuous tension formed by an individual's response to stressful events in life practice, that is, a mental state with nervous emotions formed when an individual is truly aware of the existence of stress and cannot get rid of it. Teachers' psychological stress refers to the unpleasant emotional experience experienced by teachers in all aspects of their work, such as tension, frustration, anxiety, anger and depression^[7]. In this study, the definition of university teachers' psychological stress refers to "all unpleasant emotional experiences experienced by university teachers in the educational environment of higher education". In 2017, China issued the "Opinions on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of the Construction of Teachers in the New Era", which proposed to pay attention to the physical and mental health of teachers^[8]. The purpose of this paper is to understand the level of psychological stress of university teachers and its influencing factors, and to put forward countermeasures to alleviate the psychological stress of teachers, to improve the quality of university education and promote the development of talent training.

2. Research Design and Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study uses qualitative research methods to obtain information and data on research questions from university teaching staff through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis. The collected data were preliminarily summarized and sorted out, and invalid samples were screened and eliminated to obtain the data studied in this paper. The data are further coded, classified, and obtained through description and analysis, and finally form valuable conclusions related to the research objectives.

2.2 Research Sample

This study took the teaching staff of Hebei University of Technology as the research object, and randomly selected 1 teacher from 16 faculties who had experienced or were experiencing psychological stress to interview a total of 16 teachers.

2.3 Data collection tool

This study adopts the interview method to interview the teaching staff. The interview outline consists of two themes: “factors influencing the level of psychological stress and the coping strategies of psychological stress”. Through thematic interviews, combined with open questions, the factors that affect the psychological stress level of university teachers are collected, as well as the strategies and available resources to deal with psychological stress in the specific implementation process. After obtaining the teacher’s consent, the researcher recorded the interview content, and sorted out the interview information in time after the interview.

2.4 Data Treatment

According to the research purpose, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and file analysis with 16 interviewees, preliminarily summarized and sorted out the collected data, screened and eliminated invalid samples, and obtained the data studied in this paper. Further, the data were coded and classified, and through description and analysis, four influencing factors of psychological stress were obtained: promotion and evaluation of professional title, workload, interpersonal relationship and family burden. Finally, the paper summarizes each topic and provides relevant literature support, summarizes the impact of the four factors on university teachers, and further puts forward suggestions and strategies on the psychological stress of university teachers.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1: The factors influencing the psychological stress of university teachers

Theme	Frequency	Sample Responses
Promotion and evaluation of professional titles	9	Teacher 2 said: I feel that now the job competition is large, performance assessment, scientific research titles have great stress, often stay up late and work overtime, family members do not understand and complain about the lack of companionship, which makes me very upset. Teacher 6 said: There is a lot of stress, universities have relatively high requirements for teachers’ class hours and scientific research assessment, and there are fewer opportunities for interdisciplinary exchange and research, need to invest more time in teaching and scientific research.
Workload	7	Teacher 11 said: There is a lot of stress, mainly because universities have relatively high requirements for teachers’ class hours and scientific research assessment, and there are fewer opportunities for interdisciplinary exchange and research, so need to invest more time in teaching and scientific research. Teacher 14 said: A large number of teaching tasks and scientific research make me have no time to rest, and I have to complete the assessment and evaluation of relevant topics and papers.
Relationships	4	Teacher 3 said: My stress mainly comes from my immediate supervisor. The interpersonal relationship in the school is very complicated, the organizational process is very complicated, and everything is very inefficient. My colleagues are usually busy with research work and teaching work, and there are fewer people in contact with them. The school rarely organizes team building activities for teachers. Teacher 5 said: I love teaching very much and I am strict with my class, which causes tension between me and my students.
Family burden	3	Teacher 4 said: Family chores, worry about children’s reading problems, worry about the health of elderly parents. Teacher 10 said: I think the salary compared with the workload is not up to my expectations, the cost of raising children is high, and the need to support the elderly makes me feel nervous about life.

In this part, researchers interviewed 16 teachers in Hebei university of technology, and obtained

four aspects, including professional title promotion and assessment, workload, interpersonal relationship, and family burden, to determine the factors affecting the psychological stress of Chinese university teachers and how these factors affect the psychological stress.

The factors influencing the psychological stress of university teachers are shown in Table 1.

3.1 Factors of promotion, evaluation, and employment of professional title

The promotion of university teachers' professional titles refers to the process that university teachers are gradually promoted to higher professional titles by constantly improving their teaching, scientific research and social service levels in their career. The promotion of university teachers' titles needs to meet certain conditions, such as teaching workload, scientific research achievements, social services and so on. At the same time, the professional title promotion conditions and standards of different universities may also be different.

Chinese university teachers feel that the promotion of professional title is a very important factor affecting their psychological stress. Among the 16 interviewed teachers, 9 mentioned the influence of professional title promotion and evaluation and employment on psychological stress (Teacher 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16). Teacher 2 said: "I feel that now the job competition is large, performance assessment, scientific research titles have great stress, often stay up late and work overtime, family members do not understand and complain about the lack of companionship, which makes me very upset." Teacher 6 said: "There is a lot of stress, mainly because universities have relatively high requirements for teachers' class hours and scientific research assessment, and there are fewer opportunities for interdisciplinary exchange and research, so they need to invest more time in teaching and scientific research."

This shows that the respondents pay a high degree of attention to the professional title promotion and assessment system of their universities. When it is difficult to meet the requirements of the system, psychological stress will be generated, which also reflects the relatively fierce professional title promotion, assessment, and recruitment in universities.

At present, the stress of scientific research and professional title evaluation of university teachers is increasing day by day, as well as the reform and innovation requirements of teaching methods and teaching methods under the background of informatization, the superposition of these different tasks makes most teachers feel tired. When teachers in universities face work stress for a long time, they tend to have negative cognition of self-denial and self-doubt, and then feel great psychological stress in the promotion of professional titles and assessment and employment.

Professional title promotion, scientific research competition and employment assessment are the main sources of stress for teachers in universities, which implies that anxiety caused by the scientific research-oriented competitive evaluation mechanism is one of the important factors affecting the psychological stress of teachers in universities^[9]. Researcher pointed out that university teachers are usually under high stress, and professional title promotion, scientific research stress, and performance evaluation are the main sources of stress^[10].

Many universities have increasing requirements on academic research achievements, and teachers' academic research achievements are directly linked to the assessment of employment term, title evaluation and allowance income, which is an important task that most university teachers need to face. However, whether it is the promotion of professional titles, the publication of high-level scientific research papers, or the application and completion of high-level projects, teachers need to continue to innovate and explore, pay a lot of time and energy, and may face various setbacks such as rejection, failure to apply for projects, and unsatisfactory experimental results.

Therefore, university teachers need to continuously improve their teaching, scientific research and social service levels according to the specific conditions of their universities, and actively participate in the evaluation and competition of professional title promotion in order to achieve their career development goals.

3.2 Factors of workload

The workload of university teachers refers to the workload of teachers in teaching, scientific research, social service and so on. The work load of university teachers varies from person to person, and the work load of teachers in different disciplines, different university and different titles will also be different. In addition, university teachers also need to undertake some other work, such as guiding

graduate students, attending academic conferences, and conducting academic exchanges.

University teachers feel that workload is a particularly important factor affecting their psychological stress. Of the 16 teachers interviewed, seven mentioned the impact of workload on psychological stress (Teacher 1, 2, 6, 11, 13, 14, 16). Teacher 11 said: "Leadership requirements are high, the workload of scientific research and teaching tasks is relatively heavy, and often feel that there are endless things to do." Teacher 14 said: "The large number of teaching tasks and research left me no time to rest and complete the evaluation of relevant topics and papers".

The researchers believe that this means that high job demands have a greater impact on teachers' stress triggers. Whether the quantitative or qualitative development of higher education, for university teachers, it means more workload, more and higher work requirements, resulting in huge work stress, which has a negative impact on their mental health has become a consensus in the academic community.

The main stress factor of university teachers' teaching work is that they feel more stress due to the demands of workload and scientific research. Undergraduate colleges and universities placed heavy workload on teaching staff in terms of teaching ability, practical experience, scientific research achievements, academic qualifications, and degrees, and put higher and higher demands on them, leading to teachers' overload. This is consistent with the research on the influencing factors of workload on teachers' psychological stress. University teachers have too much work to complete, are overburdened, work for a long time, and overloaded work has invisibly increased their anxiety and tension^[11].

Therefore, the work load of university teachers is relatively large, and they need to have strong teaching, scientific research and social service capabilities, but also need to have good time management and stress management capabilities to ensure the balance of work and life. Reasonable work load will reduce the psychological stress of university teachers and promote their completion of work tasks.

3.3 Factors of interpersonal relationship

Interpersonal relationship refers to the direct psychological connection established between people in communication, mainly in the form of attraction, rejection, cooperation, competition, leadership, obedience and other interactive relations between people through thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

The interpersonal relationship of university teachers mainly includes the relationship between colleagues, teachers and students, school management, academia and so on. When some relationships are not handled well, psychological stress will be caused.

University teachers feel that interpersonal relationships are also an important factor affecting their psychological stress. Of the 16 teachers interviewed, four mentioned the psychological stress caused by disharmonious interpersonal relationships (Teacher 2, 3, 5, 12). Teacher 3 said: "Not being able to establish a rapport with colleagues, sometimes being overevaluated, makes me feel a certain amount of stress." Teacher 5 said: "I love teaching very much and I am very strict with the class, which causes tension with my students. This shows that university teachers are more stressed in the relationship between colleagues, family and teachers and students."

The researchers believe that the main reason for this result is that university teachers have unclear self-roles in work and family relationships and lack the ability to cope with interpersonal stress and conflict. In daily university teaching and research, teachers have been looking for satisfaction and a sense of belonging in work and family. However, the heavy tasks of research and teaching and family affairs hardly make teachers feel satisfaction and a sense of belonging in daily university work, so the interpersonal relationship stress from work and family is also obvious.

High psychological stress is related to certain job characteristics such as work-family conflict, role problems, lack of autonomy, and lack of social support from colleagues and superiors^[12]. The proportion of stress from high to low is as follows: academic research stress, promotion stress, teaching stress, workload stress, organizational function stress, personal development stress and interpersonal relationship stress. The stress brought by interpersonal relationships is an important factor affecting the psychological stress of teachers in universities. Therefore, for teachers in universities, good interpersonal relationships can improve their psychological quality and reduce stress.

Therefore, university teachers need to have good interpersonal skills and communication skills in

order to establish good interpersonal relationships and promote their career development and academic progress. At the same time, university teachers also need to abide by professional ethics and laws and regulations, respect the rights and dignity of others, in order to establish a harmonious interpersonal relationship.

3.4 Factors of family life

The family life of university teachers refers to the life style and state of college teachers in their families. Family life is very important for everyone, and it is no exception for university teachers.

The family life of university teachers may be influenced by the characteristics of their profession. For example, due to the demands of teaching and research, university teachers may need to spend more time and energy on their work, which may have a certain impact on family life.

Among the factors that affect the psychological stress of university teachers, the heavy family economic burden is an important factor that cannot be ignored. Of the 16 teachers interviewed, 3 mentioned the influence of family life on psychological stress (Teacher 4, 9, 10). Teacher4 said: "I have a lot of things to deal with at home, choosing a school and a major for my children, and worrying about the health of my elderly parents." Teacher10 said: "I think the salary compared to the workload, I did not meet my expectations, the salary is low, raising children, supporting the old make me feel the financial strain of life."

Family life is stressful, mainly because university teachers play multiple roles in professional activities, such as teaching, scientific research, parenting, etc., and society requires them to have a strong sense of professional responsibility and dedication for each role, which makes them often show inexplicably anxious, depressed, helpless, hopeless, and so on. Feeling tired and insecure in work and life. 80% of university teachers feel a lot of stress, and the main sources of stress are children's education and economic problems^[13].

Family life of university teachers is an important part of their personal life, and they need to find a balance between work and family. University teachers are under economic stress and stress of education and old-age care from their families, and resources in the same fields as family needs (such as family support, fun of life, etc.) are more likely to offset the negative impact of psychological stress^[12]. Long-term excessive family life stress will lead to physical exhaustion, job burnout and psychological anxiety of university teachers, which is not conducive to the development of university mental health and education. It is particularly important to give full play to the role of job security in universities, improve the welfare of university teachers and raise their family's economic income.

In family life, university teachers need to pay attention to the needs and feelings of family members, actively participate in family affairs, and establish good communication and interaction with family members. At the same time, university teachers also need to pay attention to their own physical and mental health, maintain a positive attitude and lifestyle.

Therefore, the family life of university teachers is an important part of their personal life, and they need to find a balance between work and family, pay attention to the maintenance of family relations and the maintenance of personal physical and mental health.

4. Conclusion

The author interviewed 16 teachers in Hebei University of Engineering, and the research results show that teachers in university have great psychological stress in work and life. The research mainly from the title promotion and assessment, workload, interpersonal relationship, family burden four aspects to determine the influence of Chinese university teachers' psychological stress and how these factors affect the psychological stress.

5. Recommendation

Based on the findings and analysis of this study, suggestions for coping strategies are as follows:

5.1 Government support

First, the government and education authorities should effectively implement the relevant policies

for university teachers, such as raising salaries, paying attention to physical and mental health, etc., to enhance the enthusiasm and professional pride of university teachers. Second, it is necessary to give active guidance to the public opinion, create a good social atmosphere that respects teachers and attaches importance to education, and promote the establishment of teachers' self-esteem, self-confidence, rational and peaceful social mentality. Third, establish a reasonable system of teacher evaluation and professional title promotion, face squarely the talent value of university teachers, and pay attention to the material and spiritual needs of university teachers.

5.2 University support

University support. Teachers are the core strength of university development, and they also have their own development needs in the process of promoting the development of universities. The constant updating of knowledge makes the original knowledge reserve of university teachers may not be suitable for today's social and economic development. Universities should invest more resources in the re-growth and re-education of teachers, and provide more learning opportunities for teachers, such as attending academic conferences, further study, and visiting abroad for further study.

In addition, universities should pay attention to the needs of teachers, improve the management and incentive mechanism, reduce the stress of education and scientific research on university teachers, increase salaries and remuneration, enhance their teaching ability, enhance their social visibility, enhance their professional pride, enrich physical exercise programs for staff and workers, carry out psychological training for teachers, and provide adequate logistical support services.

5.3 Family support

Families should create a warm and harmonious family atmosphere to meet the psychological needs of university teachers for love and belonging. Family members give more understanding and support to university teachers, stimulate their potential and creativity, so that they can complete their teaching work and scientific research innovation with a calmer and more confident attitude, and realize their self-value in work and interpersonal communication.

5.4 Self-improvement

University teachers should enhance their awareness of mental health care, pay attention to developing interests and hobbies, and establish good interpersonal interaction with others; Cultivating a healthy lifestyle, increasing physical exercise and leisure sports are the regulating factors of mental state, which can disperse the immediate stress, generate optimism for the future, help people rebuild their life status, and promote the transformation of personal life status. Strengthen self-psychological regulation, improve the ability to resist setbacks, and pay attention to seeking support from family members.

Therefore, to relieve the psychological stress of university teachers and build a harmonious campus, it is necessary to establish a benign social support system, a scientific and reasonable management mechanism, and an effective incentive mechanism, and more importantly, it is necessary for university teachers to be good at self-psychological adjustment and strive to improve their own quality.

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