

Research on the Sources and Countermeasures of Occupational Stress among Young University Teachers

Xingxin Yang

Fuzhou University of International Studies and Trade, School of Marxism, Fuzhou, Fujian, 350202, China

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the issue of occupational stress among young university teachers, and analyzes its core sources. In the aspect of economy and life, housing mortgages, family care burdens, and salary mismatch cause stress. In terms of career development, fierce competition for professional title promotion, rigorous research assessments, and scarce opportunities for advanced studies exacerbate anxiety. From the aspect of environmental adaptation, challenges in applying new technologies, occupational uncertainty, and weakened interpersonal interactions impose a psychological burden. To address these issues, the article proposes countermeasures from three aspects. The first is to strengthen economic security and life service support, such as optimizing salary subsidies and flexible working mechanisms. The second is to improve career development paths and assessment systems, including implementing classified assessments and multiple promotion channels. The third is to build a support network integrating psychological counseling, technical support, and interpersonal interaction, to help young teachers relieve stress and integrate into the work environment.

KEYWORDS

Young teachers; Occupational stress; Source analysis; Countermeasures

1 Introduction

Under the guidance of building a leading country in education, as the vital force for strengthening the leading position of higher education, the development quality of young university teachers is directly related to the implementation of talent cultivation and innovation-driven development strategy. The "Guideline on Strengthening the Construction of Youth Faculty Teams in Higher Education Institutions in the New Era", jointly issued by the Ministry of Education and five other central department, explicitly stipulates requirements such as strengthening the development support system for young teachers and improving benefit guarantees and evaluation reforms. However, at present, some young teachers still face multiple dilemmas including competition in career development, overlapping life pressures, and challenges in technology application, which affect their occupational well-being and performance in fulfilling duties. Therefore, based on the policy context and current needs, this paper systematically analyzes the core sources of occupational stress among young university teachers, and explores targeted and operational countermeasures, with the aim of providing practical reference for implementing policy requirements and optimizing the growth ecosystem for young teachers.

2 Source Analysis of Occupational Stress among Young University Teachers

2.1 Economic and Life-related Stress

The superimposition of economic burdens and family responsibilities constitutes an important dimension of occupational stress among young university teachers, and is highly correlated with the life cycle stage of teachers' families. Most young teachers are in the overlapping stage of early career and family formation. The proportion of housing mortgage repayments to disposable income is generally high, and some teachers face significant monthly mortgage payments. Coupled with the family responsibilities of supporting elders and raising underage children, their rigid economic expenditures have increased significantly. At the same time, some young teachers have a biased perception of career rewards, and believe that the current salary system and work assessment intensity are mismatched, the basic salary level is disconnected from the cost of living index in their cities, and the effectiveness of the monetary incentive mechanism is insufficient, which fails to form an effective incentive orientation, and in turn leads to psychological imbalance. Married and teachers with children also need to allocate their energy between scientific research and teaching and family care, which further increases their life pressures.

2.2 Career Development and Assessment Stress

According to the mean statistical results of the scale survey data, young university teachers currently perceive the greatest economic pressure, followed by work pressure. Specifically, the competition and assessment system related to career development have brought continuous pressure to young teachers^[1]. The high difficulty of professional title

promotion is recognized as the core pressure point for young teachers. With the increase in the number of PhD graduates, the competition for professional title promotion has become increasingly fierce. Especially in the social context of the “up-or-out” policy, young teachers are required to meet strict assessment indicators such as scientific research achievements and teaching performance within their appointment period. In terms of scientific research assessment, young teachers are burdened by multiple pressures, such as time constraints, competition stress, and output demands. Among them, teachers in the humanities and social sciences face particularly prominent assessment pressure due to the long research cycle and the delayed realization of the value of their research achievements. In addition, the scarce opportunities for advanced studies also limits the professional growth of young teachers, further enhancing their anxiety about career development.

2.3 Environmental Adaptation and Psychological Stress

The adaptation to changes in the working environment and the psychological uncertainties have created implicit yet persistent pressure. With the transformation of teaching models, young teachers need to quickly master new technologies such as online teaching platforms and virtual classrooms. However, due to the lack of systematic training and technical support, teachers are prone to experience technical anxiety^[2]. The job insecurity is also prominent. The uncertainty of engagement examinations makes young teachers worry about their career prospects, which in turn triggers anxiety. This anxiety may further form a chain reaction through stress perception, insomnia, and other symptoms, affecting teachers' physical and mental health. The quality of interaction between teachers and students, as well as among colleagues, has declined under the remote communication model, and the difficulty of cross-departmental cooperation and coordination has increased, which also cause some young teachers to feel isolated, and increase their psychological burden.

3 Countermeasures for Alleviating Occupational Stress among Young University Students

3.1 Strengthen Economic Security and Optimize Living Assistance for Young Teachers

Colleges and universities should fully demonstrate their humanistic care for young teachers, and effectively address their urgent, difficult, worrying and anxious issues in terms of economy and daily life with precise and humane safeguard measures, so that young teachers can teach with peace of mind and live comfortably. In terms of salary system optimization, colleges and universities should establish a base salary adjustment mechanism that is dynamically linked to the regional cost of living index, and regularly increase the base salary based on core indicators such as urban price levels and average housing prices, so as to narrow the gap between income and living costs. At the same time, they can construct a multi-dimensional performance reward system that incorporates teaching effectiveness, research outputs, and social services into assessment dimensions, and establish a differentiated reward criteria to offer substantial rewards to young teachers who exceed the task requirements and achieve outstanding results, so that the salary returns can be precisely matched with the work intensity and contribution, and the incentive effect can be fully stimulated.

In the design of special subsidies, colleges and universities should implement precise subsidy policies. For young teachers with significant mortgage pressure, housing subsidies should be issued on a graduated basis according to the proportion of monthly mortgage payment to income. The maximum subsidy promotion should be appropriately considered to cover the proportion of the monthly mortgage payment. For teachers supporting multiple elderly family members and raising underage children, family care subsidies should be provided based on the number of dependent family members to alleviate the pressure of household expenses. The subsidy application process should adopt a simplified online procedure, with materials submitted through the campus information platform, and the review period should be compressed to within 5 working days to ensure the timely and full distribution of subsidies.

Building a diversified life service ecosystem that integrates on-campus and social resources and provide full-scenario support for young teachers. The university personnel departments can collaborate with on-campus logistics departments and high-quality surrounding childcare institutions to set up on-campus temporary childcare centers and summer/winter vacation childcare classes, equipped with professional caregivers and educational resources, so as to solve the problem of teachers' children care. Relying on the trade union organization, it can establish an elderly care mutual aid association to connect with community elderly care service institutions, thus providing services such as home-based elderly care and health check-up appointments for teachers. In addition, it can cooperate with launch real estate companies and agencies to launch exclusive housing purchase and rental preferential policies for teachers, build an information sharing platform for housing transactions, and provide policy consultation and convenient transaction services.

It is necessary to implement flexible working mechanisms, which clearly allows young teachers who are married with children and have special family care needs to apply for a flexible working system. These teachers can adopt staggered working hours for 1-2 days per week, and online office systems and cloud collaboration tools should be used to ensure

smooth work communication. Meanwhile, it should establish a flexible task allocation mechanism to provide assistance for teachers in adjusting their work pace during family major events, thus avoiding the aggravation of work-family conflicts. The implementation of a series of safeguard measures can not only effectively reduce the economic burden and daily troubles of young teachers, but also help them feel the organizational warmth and enhance their sense of professional belonging and well-being.

3.2 Improve Career Development Paths and Refine the Evaluation System for Young Teachers

Improving a scientifically adapted and humanistic career development and evaluation system is beneficial for young teachers to set clear growth goals and enhance their confidence in career development^[3]. Firstly, the research assessment cycle needs to be systematically optimized. It should implement a classified and differentiated assessment mechanism, and precisely set the assessment cycle based on the characteristics of disciplines. Given the delayed value realization of research achievements of humanities and social sciences, the assessment cycle can be set at 3-5 years. For science, engineering, agriculture and medicine disciplines, the assessment cycle can be set at 2-3 years. This approach ensures the depth and completeness of research, and avoids the utilitarian orientation brought by short-term assessment. In addition, a dual-track model consisting of annual progress assessment and periodic outcome assessment should be implemented. The annual assessment focuses on procedural feedback, with academic committees providing precise support such as resource connection and methodological guidance for research difficulties. The periodic assessment highlights the quality and innovation value of outcomes, and weakens the single quantitative indicator, enabling young teachers to concentrate on in-depth research.

It is necessary to optimize the professional title promotion system, and break the single orientation of "research only" to establish diversified promotion channels. The research-oriented channel focuses on academic innovation and achievement transformation, the teaching expertise channel takes curriculum construction, teaching reform and student cultivation effectiveness as core assessment indicators, and the social service channel centers on industry-university-research cooperation, public welfare services, and industry contributions. All channels have clear promotion standards and evaluation details. In addition, a special promotion quota for young teachers should be established, and promotion positions for outstanding young teachers who have been employed for 3-5 years should be reserved, so as to reduce the competition threshold and stimulate the motivation for career development.

It should integrate on-campus and social high-quality resources, organize regular academic exchanges, teaching innovation research and other activities, and provide special training opportunities for young teachers every year. It also needs to cooperate with high-level universities and research institutions, set up visiting and research programs for young teachers, and fund outstanding teachers to pursue advanced studies abroad. Meanwhile, it is necessary to provide each young teacher with a teaching mentor and a research mentor, formulate personalized development plans based on the individual characteristics of teachers, and conduct one-on-one guidance regularly to make up for their ability deficiencies. In addition, it can build a career development consultation center for young teachers to provide services such as professional title application guidance and career planning diagnosis, which can help teachers clarify their development direction, enhance their confidence in coping with career challenges, and make their career development paths smoother.

3.3 Build a Psychological Support Network to Help Young Teachers Adapt to and Integrate into the New Environment

Adhering to the philosophy of caring empowerment and precise services, focusing on the needs of young teachers in adapting to the environment and alleviating psychological stress, it can establish a comprehensive support network from three dimensions: psychological counseling, technical support, and interpersonal interaction, to help young teachers quickly settle into their positions and integrate into the collective.

It should strengthen professional psychological counseling services, and build a solid line of defense for psychological health protection. It is necessary to proactively establish a regular psychological support platform, set up a listening studio and an exclusive psychological counseling center for young teachers, form a support team consisting of full-time psychological counselors and experienced backbone teachers, and implement a one-on-one consultation mechanism, so as to precisely meet the emotional needs of young teachers. At the same time, it should regularly carry out theme-based psychological health services, and organize monthly psychological health lectures and stress management workshops, which take emotional regulation skills, prevention of occupational burnout, and self-care for young teachers as core topics, and use case analysis, scenario simulation and other forms, to impart psychological adjustment methods^[4]. Additionally, it can establish a dynamic monitoring mechanism for psychological states, and conduct a psychological health assessment once every semester to promptly understand the psychological dynamics of young teachers, provide emotional counseling and psychological support in a targeted manner, and make them feel the warmth and care of the

organization.

In response to the pain points and difficulties of young teachers in applying new technologies, it can construct a systematic technical training system to help young teachers enhance their teaching technology application capabilities. Before taking up positions, it should conduct hands-on training on core technologies such as online teaching platforms, virtual classroom construction, and multimedia courseware development, and invite technical experts and senior teachers to give on-site lectures and provide one-on-one guidance. During employment, it should establish a regular technical Q&A mechanism, assign dedicated technical support personnel, and open online consultation channels and offline assistance hotlines, so as to promptly solve technical problems. Once a quarter, it should organize a technical application exchange salon to encourage young teachers to share their technical application experiences, showcase high-quality digital teaching achievements. This method can promote learning through competitions and excellence through evaluations, effectively enhance the confidence and ability of young teachers in technical application, and build a solid technical foundation of teaching work.

All colleges and departments in universities should enrich the interactive scenarios for young teachers with the aim of building a warm connection and creating a mutual assistance atmosphere, thus promoting mutual connection and consolidating synergy for development. For example, it can regularly organize departmental team-building events, tea parties for young teachers, teaching experience sharing meetings and other activities, and conduct special activities such as academic debates, fun sports meetings, and outdoor development programs every quarter, to break through departmental barriers and interpersonal estrangement, and enable young teachers to enhance mutual understanding and deepen friendship in a relaxed atmosphere. Through online professional exchange forums, it can set up special sections covering teaching skills, scientific research tackling, and stress management, and encourage young teachers to share teaching and research experiences, and to exchange growth confusions and stress management insights at any time. The administrators should update topics and guide in-depth communication. Besides, it also needs to establish a "mentorship" assistance mechanism, and comprehensively foster a collective atmosphere of mutual assistance, care, solidarity, and progress, to continuously strengthen the professional sense of belonging and team support of young teachers, and help them quickly integrate into the new environment and embark on a new career journey.

4 Conclusion

The occupational stress among young university teachers stems from multiple dimensions such as economy and life, career development, and environmental psychology, and it is closely related to their career growth and the foundation of higher education development. The three countermeasures proposed in this paper - optimizing economic security, improving career paths, and establishing psychological support - are both targeted and practical. They can not only help alleviate young teachers' pressure and enhance their professional sense of belonging, but also stimulate their innovative vitality, thus injecting lasting momentum into the construction of an educational power and promoting the high-quality and sustainable development of higher education. In the future, only by integrating humanistic care into policy implementation and by providing targeted guarantees, scientific evaluation, and all-round support can the development problems of young teachers be addressed.

About the Author

Xingxin Yang, Master's Degree, Lecture, Research Field: Ideological and Political Education, Teacher Development.

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