THE INFLUENCE OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT ON JOB SATISFACTION AMONG COMPULSORY EDUCATION TEACHERS IN LIAOCHENG CITY, CHINA

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ABSTRACT
This study examined the influence of work-life balance (WLB) and school organizational support (SOS) on job satisfaction (JS) among 400 compulsory-education teachers in Liaocheng City, China, selected by proportionate stratified random sampling. A five-point Likert questionnaire was used, with reverse-scored items WLB01, WLB02, WLB03, and WLB07 recoded. To avoid collapsing conceptually distinct sub-dimensions into monolithic composites, a disaggregated multiple regression was conducted with the three WLB and three SOS sub-dimensions as simultaneous predictors. Teachers' WLB (M = 3.07), SOS (M = 3.01), and JS (M = 3.07) were all moderate. The model explained 35.8% of the variance in JS ($R^2 = .358$, $F = 36.58$, $p < .001$). Leadership & Emotional Support ($\beta = .291$), Personal Well-being ($\beta = .260$), and Boundary Management ($\beta = .187$) were the strongest predictors, whereas Work-Family Conflict was not unique ($p = .762$; VIF ≤ 1.87). Both hypotheses were supported, refined at the sub-dimension level. The findings suggest protecting work-family boundaries, strengthening leadership and emotional support, and improving professional development to enhance teacher satisfaction.

Keywords: Work-Life Balance, School Organizational Support, Job Satisfaction, Compulsory-Education Teachers, Liaocheng City

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INTRODUCTION

Compulsory education is the cornerstone of China's education system, undertaking the mission of cultivating high-quality citizens and laying the foundation for students' lifelong development. Teachers' job satisfaction and work-life balance (WLB) are not only closely related to their own physical and mental health and professional development, but also directly affect the quality of education (Chen et al., 2021). In recent years, reforms such as the "Double Reduction" policy and the emphasis on quality-oriented education have profoundly changed teachers' work content and requirements, and the contradiction between work and family has become increasingly prominent.

A large-scale survey covering 81,387 primary and secondary school teachers in China shows that 57.73% of respondents believe that excessive working hours negatively affect their family life, more than five times the proportion holding the opposite view; 78.78% sleep less than seven hours a day, and nearly 40% report symptoms of depression or anxiety, closely related to work pressure and WLB imbalance (Gong, 2026). In addition, non-teaching tasks such as inspections and assessments have become the main source of pressure for 68.03% of teachers, more than twice the pressure from heavy teaching tasks itself. Issues such as delayed welfare payments, unclear home-school responsibilities, and backward evaluation systems further reduce teachers' job satisfaction, while WLB imbalance is an important underlying factor.

Work-life balance refers to the dynamic equilibrium in which individuals fulfill work responsibilities while maintaining a high-quality personal and family life without excessive conflict between the two domains (Hendricks & Okunlola, 2024). Job satisfaction is the positive emotional experience and cognitive recognition generated in the process of teaching work (Lynch, 2025). The RAND Corporation's 2025 State of the American Teacher Survey found that poor work-life balance was associated with lower teacher well-being (Steiner et al., 2025), and Tamez-Robledo (2025) reported that many teachers remain burned out despite satisfaction with their workplace. However, most existing Chinese empirical studies are conducted in eastern coastal provinces or large cities; evidence from western Shandong, where rural and township schools predominate, remains scarce.

Liaocheng City is a typical prefecture-level city in western Shandong, where a large share of compulsory-education schools are located in townships and rural areas. Rural teachers commonly face multi-subject teaching, head-teacher responsibilities, and various non-teaching administrative tasks, while the popularization of instant-messaging tools makes work information invade off-duty time. School organizational support (SOS), grounded in Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) and the Job Demands-Resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001), represents the emotional, workload-related, and developmental resources schools provide to teachers. This study therefore examines how WLB and SOS influence job satisfaction among compulsory-education teachers in Liaocheng City. Two research questions guide the study: (1) How does work-life balance influence teacher job satisfaction? and (2) How does school organizational support influence teacher job satisfaction? Two hypotheses were formulated: H1, work-life balance has a significant positive influence on job satisfaction; and H2, school organizational support has a significant positive influence on job satisfaction.

The present study has important theoretical, practical, and policy significance for the high-quality development of compulsory education. For schools, the results help managers understand teachers' WLB and job satisfaction, identify key influencing factors—such as excessive non-teaching tasks and unreasonable evaluation systems—and formulate targeted measures, including streamlining non-teaching tasks, optimizing work arrangements, and strengthening emotional care, so as to improve the quality of education and teaching (NEA, 2025). For teachers, the study helps them correctly understand the importance of WLB, master effective ways to balance work and life, and reduce teacher turnover, which is significant for

the stability of the teaching team (Lynch, 2025; Tamez-Robledo, 2025). For students, teachers with good WLB and high job satisfaction are more likely to maintain positive teaching attitudes, invest more energy in teaching and student care, and provide higher-quality teaching services and psychological support, which is conducive to students' healthy growth and quality-oriented education goals.

The scope of this study covers full-time in-service teachers from public primary and junior-high schools within the administrative jurisdiction of Liaocheng City, including urban, township, and rural schools, across genders, teaching ages, professional titles, and subject types. The study examines the influences of WLB and SOS upon teacher job satisfaction at the overall construct level, without separate hypothesis testing for every sub-dimension and without comparisons with other cities or other types of educational institutions. The research was completed from March to September 2026. Compared with the eastern-coastal and large-city samples that dominate existing domestic studies, Liaocheng has its own characteristics in economic-development level, rural-school distribution, and policy-implementation environment; targeted empirical investigation of local compulsory-education teachers is therefore necessary to supplement existing regional research gaps.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

1 Work-Life Balance and Teacher Well-Being

Work-family conflict arises when role requirements from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible, so that participation in one role makes it difficult to perform the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). For Chinese compulsory-education teachers, heavy teaching loads, frequent non-teaching assignments, and digital after-hours communications frequently trigger work-to-family conflict (Li et al., 2024; Zhang & Zhou, 2025). Boundary Theory (Clark, 2000) focuses on the physical, temporal, and psychological boundaries dividing the work and family domains; high boundary permeability means that school messages and parent consultations continuously encroach on family time, which elevates role-conflict intensity and reduces well-being. Importantly, boundary permeability is largely shaped by organizational culture and administrative requirements rather than by individual teachers alone.

Spillover Theory (Staines, 1980) proposes that emotions and behavioral patterns generated in one life domain spill over into the other. Negative spillover appears when emotional exhaustion from heavy workloads transfers into family life and brings irritability, then flows back to the workplace and lowers job satisfaction. Work-Family Enrichment Theory (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) complements this negative view by emphasizing positive resource spillover: competencies and positive emotions gained in one domain can enhance performance in the other. Liao et al. (2023) found that sustained work-family conflict among Chinese teachers leads to emotional exhaustion, poor sleep, and elevated occupational stress. A systematic review covering 99 papers reported that the correlation between WLB and job satisfaction generally ranges from $r = .45$ to .68 (Hendricks & Okunlola, 2024), although Mondal and Das (2025) found a non-significant link in a secondary-school sample, indicating that the relationship is context-dependent.

Within the WLB construct, three sub-dimensions are particularly relevant to teachers. Work-family conflict captures the degree to which work intrudes on family roles; boundary management and work flexibility capture teachers' ability to separate the two domains and adjust their work rhythm; and personal well-being and work-family enrichment capture the emotional state and positive spillover between domains. For Chinese public compulsory-education teachers, fixed attendance rules and frequent after-hours communications mean that genuine work flexibility is often limited, and boundary management depends heavily on organizational norms rather than individual choice (Zhang & Zhou, 2025). Personal well-being reflects the psychological outcome of balance conditions, covering emotional status, sleep

quality, and subjective occupational-stress perception, so it serves as a critical subjective indicator of whether teachers achieve satisfactory work-life balance (Liao et al., 2023). This is why the present study measures WLB as a multi-dimensional construct rather than a single global score.

2 School Organizational Support and Teacher Outcomes

Perceived organizational support refers to employees' global belief that the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Rooted in Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), supported teachers develop a felt obligation to reciprocate through more positive work attitudes and engagement. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) reported that organizational support accounts for roughly 30-45% of the variance in employee job satisfaction. In school settings, Leadership & Emotional Support captures whether administrators understand front-line teachers' difficulties and recognize their pressure; Workload & Resource Support captures fair task distribution and material provision; and Professional Development & Collegial Support captures training, fair promotion, and peer mutual help.

Empirically, Rhoades and Eisenberger's (2002) meta-analysis confirmed that perceived organizational support consistently predicts job satisfaction and lower turnover. For teachers, principal leadership is the most visible source of such support: administrators who recognize pressure, avoid trivial non-teaching tasks, and distribute workload fairly directly shape whether teachers feel valued (Zhu et al., 2026; Cui et al., 2025).

The Job Demands-Resources Model (Demerouti et al., 2001) provides an integrated framework. Through the health-impairment pathway, high job demands (dense instructional tasks, large non-teaching assignments, long hours, and emotional labor) consume energy and produce burnout; through the motivational pathway, job resources—of which school organizational support is a key organizational resource—foster engagement and positive attitudes. Empirically, Yakawe et al. (2026) found that empathetic school leadership is strongly associated with teachers' teamwork, while Md Shah et al. (2024) linked workload management and resource provision to teacher burnout. Cui et al. (2025) and Wang et al. (2024) confirmed significant relationships among organizational support, work-related variables, and teacher attitudes in Chinese K-12 samples, and Saksaengwijit et al. (2026) reported that supportive school ecosystems raise teacher work happiness.

3 Teacher Job Satisfaction and the Integrated Model

Teacher job satisfaction covers intrinsic satisfaction (sense of achievement from student progress and classroom autonomy), extrinsic and institutional satisfaction (salary, welfare, assessment, and reward fairness), and professional growth and interpersonal satisfaction (promotion opportunities and harmonious relationships) (Yu et al., 2025; Zhu et al., 2026). Wartenberg et al. (2023) summarized that teachers with higher well-being consistently show higher job satisfaction. In an integrated model, WLB and SOS may act as two complementary resources: WLB is an individual-level resource that buffers role conflict, while SOS is an organizational resource that provides support. Because the present study does not test mediation, it applies Pearson correlation and multiple regression to examine the direct influence of WLB and SOS on job satisfaction at the construct level.

4 Empirical Evidence and Research Gaps

Empirical studies across different contexts generally support the positive WLB-satisfaction link. Hendricks and Okunlola (2024) reviewed 99 papers and reported moderate-to-high correlations between teacher work-life balance and work attitudes, while Steiner et al. (2025) showed that teachers who could balance work and personal demands reported significantly higher well-being. In China, Chen et al. (2021) used latent profile analysis on 1,740 teachers and found that teachers in more balanced profiles reported higher job satisfaction.

Group heterogeneity is also documented: female teachers commonly report lower work-life balance and job satisfaction than their male counterparts because of extra family-care responsibilities, and rural teachers face more prominent balance challenges than urban teachers because of longer commutes, thinner auxiliary staffing, and limited surrounding public resources. Contemporary studies also move from bivariate correlations toward multi-variable integrated models in which organizational support variables exhibit relatively prominent power in modifying the link between work-life balance and job satisfaction ($r = .52$, $p < .01$; Cui et al., 2025). Nevertheless, most integrated-model research targets eastern coastal provinces or large cities, and published work on western Shandong teacher populations remains limited, constituting the research gap this study addresses.

However, two gaps remain. First, most Chinese evidence comes from eastern coastal provinces and large cities, whereas western Shandong prefecture-level cities such as Liaocheng—with a predominance of rural and township schools—are under-studied. Second, few studies model WLB and SOS together as two parallel resources predicting compulsory-education teacher job satisfaction. The present study addresses both gaps by collecting primary data from 400 Liaocheng teachers and testing the two influences simultaneously.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Building on the reviewed literature, this study proposes a dual-resource model in which work-life balance and school organizational support operate as two parallel independent resources predicting teacher job satisfaction. Work-life balance captures teachers' ability to separate and integrate work and family roles (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Clark, 2000), whereas school organizational support captures the extent to which teachers feel valued, cared for, and resourced by their school (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). As shown in Figure 1, the two constructs are posited to make independent, positive contributions to job satisfaction, drawing on Boundary Theory, Spillover Theory, Organizational Support Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and the Job Demands-Resources Model. Because each construct comprises several distinct sub-dimensions, the analysis disaggregates them to identify the specific facets driving satisfaction. The hypotheses are:

H1: Work-life balance has a significant positive influence on teacher job satisfaction among compulsory-education teachers in Liaocheng City, China.

H2: School organizational support has a significant positive influence on teacher job satisfaction among compulsory-education teachers in Liaocheng City, China.

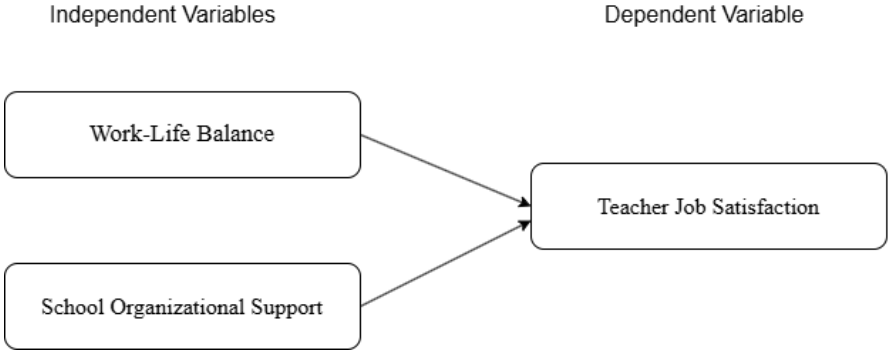

Figure 1 Conceptual framework adapted from Agha, Azmi, and Irfan (2017).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative correlational survey research design, in which a self-developed structured questionnaire served as the main instrument for gathering empirical data. The population comprised all full-time compulsory-education teachers in public primary and junior-high schools across Liaocheng City, Shandong Province; according to the Liaocheng

Municipal Bureau of Education and Sports (2026), the total number of compulsory-education full-time teachers is 53,960, of whom 32,477 are primary-school teachers and 21,483 are junior-high-school teachers, while private-school teachers, substitute teachers, kindergarten teachers, senior-high-school teachers, secondary-vocational-school teachers, and non-teaching administrative or support staff were excluded from the sampling pool. The sample size was determined using Yamane's formula at a 95% confidence level and a 5% acceptable sampling error, yielding a minimum of approximately 398 teachers, and 400 valid responses were retained. A proportionate stratified random sampling method divided the sampling frame into urban, township, and rural public compulsory-education school strata, with random selection performed within each stratum so that rural schools, the largest group in the real population, were adequately represented. The questionnaire comprised four parts: Part 1 collected demographic information on gender, age group, teaching experience, educational background, professional title, school location, school category, head-teacher status, and additional administrative sideline work; Part 2 measured work-life balance with 10 items across Work-Family Conflict (WLB01-WLB03), Boundary Management & Work Flexibility (WLB04-WLB06), and Personal Well-being & Work-Family Enrichment (WLB07-WLB10); Part 3 measured school organizational support with 10 items across Leadership & Emotional Support (SOS01, SOS02, SOS08-SOS10), Workload & Resource Support (SOS03, SOS04), and Professional Development & Collegial Support (SOS05-SOS07); and Part 4 measured teacher job satisfaction with 10 items across Intrinsic Satisfaction (JS01, JS02), Extrinsic & Institutional Satisfaction (JS03, JS04, JS07, JS08), and Professional Growth & Interpersonal Satisfaction (JS05, JS06, JS09, JS10), all using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Four negatively worded items (WLB01, WLB02, WLB03, and WLB07) were reverse-scored by recoding each value as (6 - raw score) on the five-point scale so that higher scores consistently indicated better balance, and dimension and composite scores were computed as the means of their respective items. Before formal collection, the draft questionnaire was reviewed by three qualified experts; the item-objective congruence index reached 0.92, with all retained items obtaining values between 0.67 and 1.00, and a pilot test among 30 teachers yielded Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70 for all scales and the full questionnaire (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Online questionnaires were distributed through school administrative staff after obtaining permission from local educational authorities and participating schools, with an informed-consent statement informing participants of the research purposes, anonymous data processing, voluntary participation, and the right to stop at any time. After data collection, invalid questionnaires were screened out using three rules: completion time below one-third of the average, straight-lining response patterns, and a large proportion of missing values on core items, and no missing values remained in the final sample of 400. All quantitative data were processed by IBM-SPSS Statistics software and analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics at the significance level of $\alpha = .05$; descriptively, frequency and percentage were computed for demographic variables and means and standard deviations for each dimension and composite score, with mean scores interpreted against the five-grade standard (4.21-5.00 highest, 3.41-4.20 high, 2.61-3.40 moderate, 1.81-2.60 low, and 1.00-1.80 lowest); inferentially, Pearson product-moment correlations examined the relationships among the composites, sub-dimensions, and job satisfaction. Because the constructs comprise conceptually distinct sub-dimensions that should not be collapsed into monolithic composites (particularly where reverse-scored conflict items are blended with positive well-being items), a disaggregated multiple regression with the enter method was conducted with job satisfaction as the dependent variable and the six sub-dimensions—W1 Work-Family Conflict, W2 Boundary Management & Work Flexibility, W3 Personal Well-being & Work-Family Enrichment, S1 Leadership & Emotional Support, S2 Workload & Resource Support, and S3 Professional Development & Collegial Support—as simultaneous

predictors, inspecting R^2, adjusted R^2, F, b, SE, β, t, p, and VIF to test H1 and H2 at the facet level.

RESEARCH RESULTS

1 General Information of Respondents

The 400 respondents were predominantly female (n = 271, 67.75%), aged 40-49 years (n = 152, 38.00%), followed by 30-39 years (n = 115, 28.75%). Most had 11-20 years of teaching experience (n = 136, 34.00%) and held a bachelor's degree (n = 208, 52.00%). The largest title group was Level-3 teacher (n = 130, 32.50%). In terms of school location, most worked in rural schools (n = 179, 44.75%), followed by township (n = 142, 35.50%) and urban schools (n = 79, 19.75%); most taught in primary schools (n = 237, 59.25%). The majority were not serving as head-teachers (n = 260, 65.00%) and did not take additional administrative sideline work (n = 317, 79.25%). Because rural and township schools account for nearly 80% of the respondents, the moderate descriptive levels reported below are most representative of teachers under relatively constrained resource conditions rather than of well-resourced urban schools.

Table 1 Frequency and percentage of the respondents' general information

General information	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	129	32.25%
	Female	271	67.75%
Age group	20-29 years	101	25.25%
	30-39 years	115	28.75%
	40-49 years	152	38.00%
	50 years and above	32	8.00%
Teaching experience	Less than 5 years	121	30.25%
	5-10 years	102	25.50%
	11-20 years	136	34.00%
	More than 20 years	41	10.25%
Educational background	Junior college	35	8.75%
	Bachelor's degree	208	52.00%
	Master's degree	125	31.25%
	Doctoral degree	32	8.00%
Professional title	No professional title	76	19.00%
	Level-3 teacher	130	32.50%
	Level-2 teacher	96	24.00%
	Level-1 teacher	58	14.50%
	Senior teacher	40	10.00%
School location	Urban school	79	19.75%
	Township school	142	35.50%
	Rural school	179	44.75%
School category	Primary school	237	59.25%
	Junior high school	163	40.75%
Head-teacher	Yes	140	35.00%
	No	260	65.00%
Additional administrative sideline work	Yes	83	20.75%
	No	317	79.25%
Total		400	100.00%

2 Descriptive Levels of the Variables

As shown in Table 2, respondents' overall WLB, SOS, and JS were all at a moderate level. For WLB, the three dimensions were close, with Boundary Management & Work Flexibility slightly highest. For SOS, Leadership & Emotional Support was the highest dimension, whereas Professional Development & Collegial Support was the lowest. For JS, Intrinsic Satisfaction was the highest, while Professional Growth & Interpersonal Satisfaction was the lowest.

Table 2 Means and standard deviations of the study variables

Variable / dimension	M	SD	Level
Work-Family Conflict (W1)	3.06	1.00	Moderate
Boundary Management & Work Flexibility (W2)	3.07	1.04	Moderate
Personal Well-being & Work-Family Enrichment (W3)	3.07	0.95	Moderate
Work-Life Balance (WLB total)	3.07	0.84	Moderate
Leadership & Emotional Support (S1)	3.05	0.90	Moderate
Workload & Resource Support (S2)	2.98	0.99	Moderate
Professional Development & Collegial Support (S3)	2.97	0.95	Moderate
School Organizational Support (SOS total)	3.01	0.77	Moderate
Intrinsic Satisfaction (Y1)	3.12	1.16	Moderate
Extrinsic & Institutional Satisfaction (Y2)	3.06	0.95	Moderate
Professional Growth & Interpersonal Satisfaction (Y3)	3.05	0.94	Moderate
Teacher Job Satisfaction (JS total)	3.07	0.84	Moderate

Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all scales and the full questionnaire were above 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), indicating acceptable internal-consistency reliability.

At the item level, all means fell between 2.9 and 3.2, confirming the moderate level across individual statements. Within WLB, the highest-rated item was the ability to set clear work-family boundaries (M = 3.15), and the lowest was the overall balance item (M = 2.95). Within SOS, practical support under heavy workload received the highest mean (M = 3.15), while professional-development training opportunities were lowest (M = 2.90). Within JS, intrinsic satisfaction from student growth was highest (M = 3.13), and satisfaction with the working atmosphere was relatively lower (M = 3.02).

3 Correlation Analysis

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlations. At the composite level, WLB total correlated with JS total ($r = .407$, $p < .001$) and SOS total correlated with JS total ($r = .433$, $p < .001$). At the sub-dimension level, all three WLB facets correlated with JS (W1 $r = .259$; W2 $r = .375$; W3 $r = .384$) and all three SOS facets correlated with JS (S1 $r = .395$; S2 $r = .327$; S3 $r = .315$), all $p < .001$. WLB and SOS were nearly independent ($r = .023$, $p > .05$), confirming they carry separate information. The strongest bivariate correlations with JS were S1 ($r = .395$) and W3 ($r = .384$); the weakest was W1 ($r = .259$).

Table 3 Pearson correlations among the key variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
W1	3.06	1.00	1						
W2	3.07	1.04	.522***	1					
W3	3.07	.95	.550***	.626***	1				
S1	3.05	.90	.020	.008	−.018	1			
S2	2.98	.99	−.005	.095	.003	.504***	1		
S3	2.97	.95	−.020	.043	.042	.486***	.468***	1	
JS	3.07	.84	.259***	.375***	.384***	.395***	.327***	.315***	1

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. W1 = Work-Family Conflict; W2 = Boundary Management & Work Flexibility; W3 = Personal Well-being & Work-Family Enrichment; S1 = Leadership & Emotional Support; S2 = Workload & Resource Support; S3 = Professional Development & Collegial Support.

4 Regression Analysis

Table 4 presents the disaggregated multiple regression of the six sub-dimensions on JS. Together they explained 35.8% of the variance ($R = .599$, $R^2 = .358$, Adjusted $R^2 = .349$, $F(6, 393) = 36.58$, $p < .001$). Five of the six sub-dimensions were significant: Leadership & Emotional Support (S1) was the strongest ($\beta = .291$, $t = 5.85$, $p < .001$), followed by Personal Well-being & Work-Family Enrichment (W3; $\beta = .260$, $t = 4.70$, $p < .001$) and Boundary Management & Work Flexibility (W2; $\beta = .187$, $t = 3.44$, $p < .001$). Workload & Resource Support (S2; $\beta = .116$, $t = 2.34$, $p = .020$) and Professional Development & Collegial Support (S3; $\beta = .101$, $t = 2.07$, $p = .039$) were also significant, whereas Work-Family Conflict (W1) was not unique ($\beta = .015$, $t = 0.30$, $p = .762$). VIF ranged from 1.45 to 1.87, indicating no multicollinearity. Thus, the influence of work-life balance is carried mainly by boundary management and personal well-being rather than by the mere absence of conflict, while organizational support operates most strongly through leadership and emotional support.

Table 4 Multiple regression of WLB and SOS on job satisfaction

Predictor	b	SE	β	t	p
(Constant)	0.488	0.183	-	2.66	.008
W1 Work-Family Conflict	0.013	0.042	0.015	0.30	.762
W2 Boundary Mgmt & Flex.	0.150	0.044	0.187	3.44	<.001
W3 Personal Well-being	0.228	0.049	0.260	4.70	<.001
S1 Leadership & Emotional	0.272	0.046	0.291	5.85	<.001
S2 Workload & Resource	0.097	0.042	0.116	2.34	.020
S3 Prof Dev & Collegial	0.088	0.043	0.101	2.07	.039

$R = .599$; $R^2 = .358$; Adjusted $R^2 = .349$; $F(6, 393) = 36.58$, $p < .001$; SEE = 0.675; VIF ranged from 1.45 to 1.87.

The disaggregated model was highly significant ($p < .001$), with the six sub-dimensions accounting for about 36% of the variance in JS; the remaining 64% reflects factors outside the model, such as salary, school climate, and teacher personality. A one-unit increase in S1 raises JS by about 0.27 units, and a one-unit increase in W3 raises it by about 0.23 units. The non-significant W1 result ($p = .762$) is theoretically informative: once boundary management, personal well-being, and the organizational-support facets are controlled, the frequency of work-family interference itself carries no unique explanatory power.

Table 5 summarizes the hypothesis testing. Both H1 and H2 were consistent with the data. At the composite level, WLB and SOS each significantly predicted JS; at the disaggregated level, the influence was driven by boundary management and personal well-being within WLB, and by all three SOS facets, with leadership and emotional support strongest. Work-Family Conflict (W1) alone was not unique.

Table 5 Summary of hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Result
H1: Work-life balance has a significant positive influence on job satisfaction among compulsory-education teachers in Liaocheng City, China.	Consistent
H2: School organizational support has a significant positive influence on job satisfaction among compulsory-education teachers in Liaocheng City, China.	Consistent

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

1 Work-Life Balance and Job Satisfaction

Consistent with H1, work-life balance positively predicted job satisfaction at the construct level. The disaggregated model clarifies where this originates: boundary management and work flexibility (W2) and personal well-being and enrichment (W3) were unique positive predictors, whereas work-family conflict (W1) was not. This aligns with Boundary Theory and Spillover Theory: when teachers can draw clear boundaries and when family support enriches their work, attitudes improve (Clark, 2000; Staines, 1980; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). The non-significant W1 indicates that it is not the mere presence of interference but teachers' flexibility and emotional resources to manage it that sustains satisfaction (Hendricks & Okunlola, 2024; Steiner et al., 2025; Agha, Azmi, & Irfan, 2017). H1 is supported, refined by the finding that balance operates through boundary and well-being resources rather than conflict reduction alone.

2 School Organizational Support and Job Satisfaction

Supporting H2, school organizational support predicted job satisfaction, with leadership and emotional support (S1) the strongest single predictor in the model. Workload and resource support (S2) and professional development and collegial support (S3) also contributed uniquely, though more modestly. This is explained by Organizational Support Theory and Social Exchange Theory: teachers who feel understood, recognized, and resourced by school leaders reciprocate with positive work attitudes (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Blau, 1964; Kurtessis et al., 2017), and the JD-R model frames support as a resource buffering high demands (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The primacy of S1 suggests that, in this rural-dominant setting, what principals do day-to-day—listening to teachers and avoiding arbitrary trivial task assignments—matters at least as much as hardware and training. H2 is supported.

3 Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, Liaocheng compulsory-education teachers perceive their work-life balance, organizational support, and job satisfaction all at a moderate level, with professional development, reward fairness, and career support comparatively weaker. The disaggregated analysis reveals that satisfaction is driven by specific factors: teachers are most satisfied when they can flexibly manage work-family boundaries, derive personal well-being from their roles, and—above all—feel understood and emotionally supported by school leaders. The mere frequency of work-family interference does not itself predict satisfaction once these resources are accounted for. Both hypotheses are supported and refined at the sub-dimension level.

Theoretically, the study confirms that work-life balance and school organizational support jointly predict teacher job satisfaction as two independent resources. Because the two were nearly orthogonal, they operate through distinct pathways: WLB through boundary and spillover processes, and SOS through reciprocity and resource buffering. The disaggregated results further show that the active ingredients are boundary management and personal well-being on the work-life side, and leadership-emotional support on the organizational side. Conducted in western Shandong, where rural and township schools predominate, the study extends these theories beyond better-studied eastern-coastal samples.

Practically, the findings offer targeted guidance. First, schools should protect off-duty boundaries by streamlining non-teaching tasks and limiting after-hours messages, because boundary flexibility—not conflict absence—sustains satisfaction. Second, and most important, leaders should strengthen emotional support by listening to teachers and recognizing occupational pressure, as this was the strongest predictor. Third, schools should improve professional development, reward fairness, and resource provision. Fourth, educational authorities should allocate additional staffing and resources to rural schools, where constraints are most acute.

4 Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations apply. The cross-sectional self-reported design limits causal inference; the sample is drawn only from Liaocheng and is predominantly female and rural, limiting generalizability; and the study did not test mediating mechanisms. Future research should extend sampling to other regions, compare urban and rural schools, add mediators such as burnout and self-efficacy, and use longitudinal designs. Notwithstanding these limitations, the study identifies concrete levers—boundary protection, leadership recognition, and developmental support—that rural and township schools can act on immediately.

In sum, teacher job satisfaction is sustained by the joint presence of two resources—a manageable boundary between work and family, and a school environment that recognizes, supports, and develops its teachers. For Liaocheng's compulsory-education system, protecting off-duty time and investing in leadership and developmental support are mutually reinforcing strategies.

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