

# FACTORS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE AFFECTING THE OCCUPATIONAL WELL-BEING OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN CHINA

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## ARTICLE HISTORY

**Received:** 22 March 2026

**Revised:** 22 March 2026

**Published:** 27 March 2026

## ABSTRACT

In the context of modernizing educational governance and advancing high-quality basic education in China, primary school teachers' occupational well-being has become a key indicator of school organizational effectiveness. Organizational climate, as a critical contextual factor within school management, is closely associated with teachers' professional experiences. Drawing on the Job Demands–Resources theory, this study conducts a systematic review of the literature to examine the structural characteristics of organizational climate in Chinese primary schools and the dimensional features of teachers' occupational well-being. From a theoretical perspective, it explores the underlying mechanisms linking organizational climate to occupational well-being. The review reveals disparities across regions, urban–rural settings, and organizational dimensions. Resource-related factors tend to enhance teachers' occupational well-being, whereas excessive workload may undermine positive professional experiences. A structural alignment is observed between specific dimensions of organizational climate and corresponding aspects of occupational well-being. The study provides theoretical insights for optimizing school management and promoting teachers' occupational well-being, while identifying gaps in the current literature to inform future research.

**Keywords:** Organizational Climate, Occupational Well-Being, Primary School Teachers

**CITATION INFORMATION:** He, X. (2026). Factors Of Organizational Climate Affecting the Occupational Well-Being of Primary School Teachers in China. *Procedia of Multidisciplinary Research*, 4(3), 71.

## INTRODUCTION

International management theories, such as the Job Demands – Resources (JD-R) Theory and Social Exchange Theory, have been widely applied to investigate the relationship between organizational climate and teachers' well-being, forming a comprehensive theoretical framework. However, in the Chinese context, existing research tends to focus on specific regions or school types, lacking a nationally oriented systematic exploration that captures the overall landscape and underlying mechanisms. China's regional and urban – rural disparities in educational development further contribute to variations in primary schools' organizational climate and teachers' occupational well-being, underscoring the need for a targeted and systematic review. This study conducts a systematic review of the literature on the factors of organizational climate affecting Chinese primary school teachers' occupational well-being. It addresses three core themes: analyzing the current status and regional/urban – rural characteristics of organizational climate in primary schools; exploring the overall trends and demographic differences in teachers' occupational well-being; and examining the influence of organizational climate dimensions on teachers' well-being and their contextual adaptability. The theoretical significance of this review lies in integrating Western theoretical frameworks with China's primary education management practices, verifying their localized applicability, and contributing to the refinement of China's basic education management theory system. In terms of practical value, the review provides evidence for policy-making and resource allocation, offers managerial insights for school leaders, presents a Chinese case for global research, and addresses practical challenges related to teacher workforce stability and the balanced development of basic education in China.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a systematic literature review approach to ensure rigor, transparency, and replicability. The literature search was conducted in the following databases: CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), Wanfang Data, and Google Scholar, covering the period from 2010 to 2025. The search employed keywords such as "organizational climate", "school climate", "occupational well-being", "teacher well-being", "primary school teachers", and "China", combined using Boolean operators. Inclusion criteria were: (1) peer-reviewed empirical or theoretical studies; (2) studies focusing on primary school teachers in China; (3) studies explicitly addressing organizational climate and/or occupational well-being. Exclusion criteria included: (1) non-peer-reviewed sources such as conference papers or dissertations without clear methodological descriptions; (2) studies focusing on secondary or higher education contexts; (3) studies not available in full text. A total of 120 articles were initially identified. After screening titles and abstracts, 58 were selected for full-text review. Following a full-text assessment against the inclusion criteria, 38 studies were finally included in the review. The selected literature was analyzed thematically, with attention to research contexts, methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and empirical findings. This review does not aim to aggregate statistical results but to synthesize theoretical insights and empirical patterns, identify research gaps, and critically evaluate the state of knowledge.

### **Organizational Climate in Chinese Primary Schools: Construction Status and Differentiated Characteristics**

A key finding from the reviewed literature is that the organizational climate in Chinese primary schools exhibits significant regional, dimensional, and urban–rural disparities.

#### **Regional Gradient Differences**

Multiple studies indicate a distinct regional gradient in organizational climate, characterized by a pattern of "developed eastern regions > central regions > underdeveloped western regions" (China National Academy of Educational Sciences, 2022). In eastern regions, schools benefit

from greater investment in educational resources, well-established management mechanisms, and advanced leadership practices, which foster democratic leadership, professional development opportunities, and teaching autonomy. In contrast, western regions face constraints such as resource shortages, weak school management capacities, and outdated administrative practices, resulting in limited professional development support, inadequate rights protection, and reduced teaching autonomy. These regional differences are consistently reported across studies, though methodological variations (e.g., sample selection, measurement instruments) limit direct comparability.

### **Imbalance in Dimensional Development**

The literature also reveals uneven development across dimensions of organizational climate. Collegial relationships and campus culture are consistently identified as advantageous dimensions, attributed to traditional Chinese cultural values of harmony and collaboration (Yuan & Zhang, 2024). Conversely, workload and evaluation/incentives are reported as core shortcomings. Teachers frequently cite excessive non-teaching administrative tasks and after-school service duties as major stressors, while rigid evaluation mechanisms focused on student test scores undermine professional motivation. Although these patterns are widely documented, few studies critically examine how these dimensions interact or how their relative importance varies across school contexts.

### **Urban–Rural Dual Disparity**

A persistent urban–rural divide is evident in the literature. Urban primary schools generally provide richer professional development opportunities, more equitable task allocation, and stronger rights protection mechanisms (Yang, 2023). In contrast, rural schools face teacher shortages, excessive workloads, limited access to high-quality training, and authoritarian leadership styles. These disparities are often linked to broader structural inequalities in resource allocation. However, the reviewed studies rarely employ comparative research designs that account for confounding variables, and few explore the mechanisms through which urban–rural differences translate into organizational climate outcomes.

In summary, the construction of organizational climate in Chinese primary schools exhibits significant regional gradient differences, imbalanced dimensional development, and a pronounced urban–rural dual structure. Eastern regions and urban schools demonstrate clear advantages in dimensions such as leadership climate, professional development, and teaching autonomy, while western regions and rural schools lag behind due to resource constraints and management capacity limitations. Collegial relationships and campus culture emerge as advantageous dimensions, whereas workload and evaluation/incentives constitute persistent shortcomings. These differentiated characteristics reflect underlying structural issues, including uneven resource allocation, incomplete teacher support systems, and insufficiently refined school management mechanisms. Identifying these disparities provides a crucial foundation for subsequent analysis of the influence of organizational climate on teacher occupational well-being and highlights key entry points for targeted policy interventions and school management improvements.

## **Occupational Well-Being of Chinese Primary School Teachers: Development Trends and Group Characteristics**

### **Overall Level and Dimensional Imbalance**

The reviewed studies indicate a steady upward trend in the overall level of occupational well-being among Chinese primary school teachers (Wang, 2022). However, this well-being is multidimensional, encompassing emotional, cognitive, social, and professional achievement components. A consistent finding is that social well-being—derived from collegial relationships and peer support—scores highest, while cognitive well-being and professional achievement well-being are relatively lower. These imbalances are often attributed to excessive workloads,

limited time for professional reflection, and evaluation systems that undervalue teaching innovation and long-term educational outcomes.

### **Demographic Characteristics**

Demographic differences in occupational well-being are widely reported. Teachers with senior professional titles, higher educational attainment, and sustained participation in professional development report higher well-being (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). In contrast, three groups are identified as having lower well-being: female teachers, who face more pronounced work–family conflict; mid-career teachers (5–15 years of experience), who encounter high pressure from professional title evaluation and daily teaching; and rural teachers, who experience limited professional development opportunities, lower material treatment, and heavier workloads.

### **Alignment with Regional and Urban–Rural Differences**

The literature reveals that regional and urban–rural differences in occupational well-being align closely with those observed in organizational climate. Teachers in eastern regions and urban schools report significantly higher well-being than their counterparts in western regions and rural schools (Collie, Granziera, & Martin, 2015). This alignment suggests that organizational climate may serve as a key mediating mechanism linking structural factors to teacher well-being. However, few studies have empirically tested this mediating relationship using longitudinal or multi-level data. In summary, the overall level of occupational well-being among Chinese primary school teachers is on the rise, yet its development across dimensions remains uneven. Social well-being, supported by positive collegial relationships, constitutes a relative strength, whereas cognitive well-being and professional achievement well-being represent persistent weaknesses. Significant demographic differences exist, with female teachers, mid-career teachers, and rural teachers reporting lower well-being. Furthermore, regional and urban–rural disparities in occupational well-being closely mirror those observed in organizational climate, suggesting a structural linkage between the two constructs. These patterns underscore the need for differentiated intervention strategies and highlight the importance of improving organizational climate as a pathway to enhancing teacher well-being.

### **Influence Effects and Mechanisms of Organizational Climate Dimensions on Occupational Well-Being**

#### **Positive Influence of Seven Dimensions**

Seven dimensions of organizational climate—leadership climate, collegial relationships, professional development, evaluation and incentives, rights protection, campus culture, and teaching autonomy—are consistently found to have significant positive effects on teacher occupational well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Among these, leadership climate and rights protection emerge as core factors. Democratic leadership fosters a supportive work environment and enhances teacher autonomy, while robust rights protection systems provide professional security and reduce career-related anxiety. These dimensions are often conceptualized as job resources within the JD-R framework.

#### **Strongest Negative Influence of Workload**

Workload is the only dimension consistently reported to have a significant negative impact on teacher well-being, and its effect size is often larger than that of positive dimensions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Teachers face heavy teaching responsibilities alongside non-teaching administrative tasks and after-school services, particularly in the context of the "double reduction" policy. Excessive workload leads to physical and emotional exhaustion, reduces cognitive well-being, and constrains professional development. Within the JD-R framework, workload represents a job demand that depletes energy and undermines well-being.

#### **Dimensional Matching Effects**

A notable pattern across the literature is the "dimensional matching" between specific organizational climate dimensions and corresponding aspects of well-being. Campus culture and collegial relationships most strongly predict social well-being; professional development and

teaching autonomy are most closely associated with professional achievement well-being; leadership climate and workload most strongly influence emotional and cognitive well-being; and evaluation/incentives and rights protection have comprehensive effects across all well-being dimensions (Hoy & Clover, 1986; Pang, 2023). This finding suggests that improving teacher well-being requires targeted interventions tailored to specific well-being dimensions. In summary, the reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that seven dimensions of organizational climate exert significant positive effects on teachers' occupational well-being, with leadership climate and rights protection serving as core influencing factors. In contrast, workload stands out as the only dimension with a consistently strong negative impact. Moreover, a clear pattern of dimensional matching exists, wherein specific climate dimensions align with distinct well-being components. These findings reveal the complex mechanisms through which organizational climate influences teacher well-being and provide a theoretical basis for targeted interventions. They also suggest that optimizing organizational climate requires not only the enhancement of supportive resources but also the reduction of excessive job demands, particularly workload, to achieve balanced improvements in teacher well-being.

## CONCLUSION

This systematic review synthesizes the existing literature on organizational climate and occupational well-being among primary school teachers in China. The findings reveal significant regional, dimensional, and urban–rural disparities in organizational climate, with eastern regions and urban schools consistently outperforming their counterparts. Collegial relationships and campus culture emerge as strengths, while workload and evaluation mechanisms represent persistent challenges. Teachers' occupational well-being is generally improving but varies across dimensions and demographic groups. Social well-being is relatively high, whereas cognitive and professional achievement well-being are areas of concern. Female teachers, mid-career teachers, and rural teachers report lower well-being, and regional/urban–rural differences mirror those in organizational climate. The review confirms that most organizational climate dimensions positively influence teacher well-being, with leadership climate and rights protection playing core roles. Workload is the strongest negative factor, and dimensional matching effects indicate that different climate dimensions affect distinct well-being components. These patterns are largely consistent with the JD-R theory, supporting its applicability in the Chinese context. However, several gaps remain. First, most studies are cross-sectional and regionally limited, leaving longitudinal and nationally representative research scarce. Second, few studies critically examine the mechanisms linking organizational climate to well-being, such as the mediating roles of psychological capital or work engagement. Third, the literature lacks methodological diversity, with heavy reliance on quantitative surveys and limited use of mixed-methods or comparative approaches. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs, multi-level analyses, and cross-regional comparisons to deepen understanding of causal relationships and contextual dynamics. From a practical perspective, this review suggests that optimizing organizational climate requires macro-level policy adjustments—such as balancing educational resources, managing teacher workload, strengthening rights protection, and implementing regionally tailored strategies—as well as micro-level school management efforts, including democratic leadership, professional development support, and inclusive campus culture. These implications are critical for stabilizing the teacher workforce and advancing the high-quality development of basic education in China.

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**Data Availability Statement:** The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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