The Influence of Confucian Ethics and Cultural Values on Teacher Motivation in Public Middle Schools in Southern China

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Abstract: This research explores the philosophical and cultural dimensions of teacher motivation in public middle schools in southern China, emphasizing the role of Confucian ethics, cultural identity, and moral values in shaping professional commitment. While studies on teacher motivation in developing economies often focus on economic and systemic factors, this research takes a culturally embedded approach, examining how Confucian principles of duty, harmony, and social responsibility influence teachers' professional identity, intrinsic motivation, and job satisfaction. The study is structured around two primary dimensions: extrinsic factors (contextual, policy, systemic, and school-level) and intrinsic factors (personal and philosophical engagement with the profession). Utilizing an ethnographic approach and a questionnaire across six provinces, the research investigates how traditional cultural values interact with contemporary educational challenges, particularly in the aftermath of societal crises. Findings indicate that Team Harmony, Integration with the Job, and Commitment to the Profession—values deeply rooted in Confucian thought and collectivist philosophy—are rated positively by teachers, while Personal Development, often associated with individualistic growth, scores lower. To address motivation challenges, this study proposes a culturally responsive motivation framework that incorporates Confucian ethics and axiological perspectives on education, advocating for policies that respect moral responsibility, social cohesion, and professional dignity. Recommendations include establishing clear career pathways aligned with traditional teacher virtues, fostering professional development rooted in cultural identity, recognizing teachers' contributions in ways that align with cultural values of respect and hierarchy, and promoting headteacher-teacher relationships that reflect ethical leadership principles. This research contributes to the philosophy of

education and cultural studies, offering valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and scholars in understanding how cultural and axiological perspectives shape teacher motivation in China's evolving educational landscape.

Keywords: Confucian Ethics; Philosophy of Education; Cultural Identity; Axiology in Teaching; Intrinsic Factors; Contextual Factors; Policy And Systemic Factors; School Level Factors And Individual Teacher Level Factors.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher motivation has been recognized as a vital factor influencing the quality of education and student outcomes. Demotivated teachers are more likely to experience high levels of stress, burnout, and attrition from the teaching profession (Kafumbu, 2019; Liu, Keeley, & Sui, 2023). This results in detrimental impacts on student learning, achievement, and educational system performance. However, despite the critical importance of teacher motivation, there has been limited empirical research comprehensively examining the factors that influence motivation levels among teachers, especially research utilizing both intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors in the analysis. This study aims to address this research gap by investigating the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence teacher motivation in public middle schools located in the southern region of China. Public middle schools are chosen as the context of this study because the vast majority of students in China attend public schools due to their lower costs compared to private schooling options (Li, Azar, & Ahmad, 2024). With enrollment numbers steadily increasing in Chinese public schools each year, often outpacing resources, it is crucial to study and understand ways to effectively motivate teachers working within the public education system. Public schools also serve economically disadvantaged populations in rural areas across southern China, making the motivation levels of teachers in these schools uniquely important for ensuring educational advancement and equality across the country (Putri et al., 2019). Overall, because teachers themselves are understood to be the most critical factor influencing the quality of education and student performance outcomes, improving teacher motivation through examining and addressing the factors that influence it, both positively and negatively, is essential for the elevation of China's educational system and institutions (Zhang, Yu, & Liu, 2019). However, despite Chinese government efforts to boost teacher motivation through various policies emphasizing the value of teachers in society, chronic low motivation and dissatisfaction among teachers persist, especially among public middle school teachers in southern China (Zhang, Admiraal, & Saab, 2021). Problematically, this has led to issues such as high

teacher turnover and resignation, which subsequently create teacher shortages across China and further negatively impact education quality (Fu et al., 2022). A complex array of factors contributes to the low motivation levels observed among Chinese public school teachers. These include inadequate compensation and pay structures (Xuehui, 2018), lack of social respect for the teaching profession, challenging student behaviors and classroom environments (Ning, 2019), limited opportunities for career development and growth (Fute et al., 2022), excessive workload demands (Yang et al., 2019), and more. While the Chinese government has attempted to address teacher dissatisfaction through educational policies that profess to highly value teachers and their critical role in society, motivation continues to be a critical issue negatively impacting China's teaching workforce, especially in disadvantaged rural public schools (Education, 2018). This study aims to fill the gaps in the currently limited body of empirical research investigating teacher motivation in the southern region of China. It will examine both intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing the motivation levels of public middle school teachers in southern China through the utilization of quantitative methodology. The factors considered will be comprehensive in scope, encompassing school contextual factors such as location and socioeconomics (Li, Azar, & Ahmad, 2024), systemic factors such as salary, instability, and professional development structures and quality (Fute et al., 2022), school-based factors including leadership culture and autonomy (Zhang, Yu, & Liu, 2019), and individual teacher-level factors such as workload, classroom management challenges, emotional wellbeing, and job satisfaction (Yang et al., 2019). Furthermore, the complex relationships and interplay between these various factors and teacher motivation will be thoroughly analyzed. The findings produced by this study will significantly contribute to the body of scholarly research and knowledge on teacher motivation specifically within the understudied context of southern China. The research will move beyond compensation and training considerations by categorizing the wide array of influencing factors into context, system, school, and teacher levels (Liu, Keeley, & Sui, 2023). This provides a more holistic perspective on improving teacher motivation. Additionally, the research takes a localized approach, focusing closely on the issues and challenges actually faced by teachers working in public middle school environments across southern China. From this, targeted and context-appropriate support techniques and suggestions to boost motivation can be developed. The quantitative data collection methodology also helps address gaps in and limitations of previous studies on this topic that were mostly qualitative in nature (Liu &

Onwuegbuzie, 2014). For the schools involved in the study, the research can have immediate impacts on important decision-making processes, policy development, and teacher support programs and resources. It may also lead to beneficial enhancements in school environments and cultures and advance the recruitment and development of highly motivated and high-performing teachers (Zhang, Admiraal, & Saab, 2021). The research findings will also be of significant use for China's Ministry of Education as well as other national educational research institutions and policy-making bodies, helping them to improve educational institutions and formulate effective policies and initiatives aimed at improving teacher motivation. Since there have been few empirical studies examining teacher motivation in the southern region of China thus far (Liu & Onwuegbuzie, 2014), this study serves to fill an important research gap and provide much-needed evidence-based insights and recommendations to inform future education policy, programming, and practice in this context. The research takes a broad approach, encompassing both rural and urban school environments in its investigation into the factors motivating teachers across settings in southern China. It will shed light on the distinct motivational factors influencing teachers in rural versus urban public middle schools. These findings can drive future scientific inquiry on tailoring school environments, support systems, and policies to optimize teacher motivation across diverse settings. Ultimately, this has the potential to elevate the quality of education nationally (Zhang, Yu, & Liu, 2019). As education provides the foundation of knowledge, skills, values and mindsets that shape students' trajectories and abilities to positively contribute to society, motivated teachers are essential for societal progress and sustainable development (Zhu, 2019). By understanding the factors influencing the mindsets, emotions, and motivations of teachers, proactive steps can be taken at the policy, school, and individual level to inspire positive change. Improving teacher motivation now through empirical studies aimed at identifying points of leverage will likely yield benefits for teacher recruitment, retention, effectiveness, and education as a whole over the long term (Ball, 2021). It will lead to the development of an educated, engaged, and dynamic labor force essential for societal advancement.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Teacher Motivation

Teacher motivation has been recognized as a vital factor influencing the quality of education and student outcomes. Demotivated teachers are more

likely to experience high levels of stress, burnout, and attrition from the teaching profession (Kafumbu, 2019; Liu, Keeley, & Sui, 2023). This results in detrimental impacts on student learning, achievement, and overall educational system performance. However, despite the critical importance of teacher motivation, there has been limited empirical research comprehensively examining the diverse factors that influence motivation levels among teachers, especially research utilizing both intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors in the analysis. This study aims to address this research gap by thoroughly investigating the various intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence teacher motivation, specifically in public middle schools located in the southern region of China. Public middle schools are chosen as the context of this study because the vast majority of students in China attend public schools due to their lower costs compared to private schooling options. With enrollment numbers steadily increasing in Chinese public schools each year, often outpacing resources, it is crucial to closely study and understand ways to effectively motivate teachers working within the public education system. Public schools also serve economically disadvantaged populations in rural areas across southern China, making the motivation levels of teachers working in these schools uniquely important for ensuring educational advancement and equality across the country (Putri et al., 2019). Teachers themselves are understood to be the most critical factor influencing the quality of education and student performance outcomes, improving teacher motivation through examining and addressing the factors that influence it, both positively and negatively, is essential for the elevation of China's educational system and institutions (Zhang, Yu, & Liu, 2019). However, despite Chinese government efforts to boost teacher motivation through various policies emphasizing the value of teachers in society, chronic low motivation and dissatisfaction among teachers persist, especially among public middle school teachers in southern China (Zhang, Admiraal, & Saab, 2021). Problematically, this has led to issues such as high teacher turnover and resignation, which subsequently create teacher shortages across China and further negatively impact education quality (Fu et al., 2022). A complex array of factors contributes to the low motivation levels observed among Chinese public school teachers. These include inadequate compensation and pay structures (Xuehui, 2018), lack of social respect for the teaching profession, challenging student behaviors and classroom environments (Ning, 2019), limited opportunities for career development and growth (Fute et al., 2022), excessive workload demands (Yang et al., 2019), and more. While the Chinese government has attempted to address teacher dissatisfaction

through educational policies that profess to highly value teachers and their critical role in society, motivation continues to be a critical issue negatively impacting China's teaching workforce, especially in disadvantaged rural public schools (Education, 2018). This study aims to fill the gaps in the currently limited body of empirical research investigating teacher motivation in the southern region of China. It will examine both intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing the motivation levels of public middle school teachers in southern China through the utilization of quantitative methodology. The factors considered will be comprehensive in scope, encompassing school contextual factors such as location and socioeconomics, systemic factors such as salary, instability, and professional development structures and quality (Fute et al., 2022), school-based factors including leadership culture and autonomy, and individual teacher-level factors such as workload, classroom management challenges, emotional wellbeing, and job satisfaction (Yang et al., 2019). Furthermore, the complex relationships and interplay between these various factors and teacher motivation will be thoroughly analyzed.

2.2 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation refers to internal drive, interests, and satisfaction, while extrinsic motivation involves external rewards, pressures, incentives that shape behaviors (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation arises from inherent enjoyment or interest in the work itself, while extrinsic motivation relies on reinforcement contingencies and reward systems (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Extrinsic motivating factors can be further classified into three main categories: wider sociocultural influences, education system policies, and school-related factors. Intrinsic motivating factors relate more closely to individual teacher perceptions, attitudes, needs, and dispositions (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This study comprehensively examines how both intrinsic and extrinsic factors relate to and impact teacher motivation.

2.3 Sociocultural Factors Influencing Teacher Motivation

The wider sociocultural context substantially shapes teacher motivation. Key contextual factors that affect motivation include the geographical location of schools, local socioeconomic conditions, and environmental instability/crises. Rural public schools often face shortages of funding and resources, challenges recruiting and retaining qualified teachers, and lower levels of teacher motivation compared to urban schools. The economic realities in poorer regions also lead some teachers to take on second jobs

outside school to supplement their incomes, which can negatively impact their energy, time, and motivation for teaching. Environmental instability and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic also critically impact teacher motivation and wellbeing. School closures, transitions to remote teaching, and pay suspensions demoralized and demotivated many teachers worldwide (Toto & Limone, 2021). Chinese public school teachers faced enormous uncertainty and emotional strain. Such contextual challenges outside the direct control of schools significantly shape teacher motivation.

2.4 Education Policies Influencing Teacher Motivation

National and district education policies related to teacher recruitment, compensation, professional development, performance evaluation, and career advancement also substantially impact teacher motivation levels (Education, 2018; Fute et al., 2022). Teacher compensation policies determine whether pay adequately and equitably compensates teachers for their work and qualifications. In many countries including China, low and inconsistent teacher salaries frequently demotivate teachers and create retention challenges (Xuehui, 2018). The quality and availability of professional development opportunities enable or constrain skill development and career growth. Weak professional development fails to enhance teacher capacity and motivation. Meanwhile evaluation policies shape teachers' perceptions of fairness and being valued. Career advancement policies determine whether teachers have opportunities for increased responsibilities and impact that sustain motivation and engagement (Fute et al., 2022). Improving such education policies is essential to bolstering teacher motivation.

2.5 School-Related Factors Influencing Teacher Motivation

School administration, leadership culture, resource availability, collegial relationships, and the overall work environment also significantly affect teacher motivation (Liu, 2016; Wang, 2005). Unsupportive or overbearing leadership demoralizes teachers and undermines engagement, while empowering, inspiring leadership improves teacher motivation and buy-in. Resource deficiencies, large class sizes, lack of planning time, and excessive workloads commonly demotivate teachers. Positive, collaborative school cultures and faculty relationships motivate teachers, while isolation and conflict decrease teacher motivation and efficacy. Schools should thus foster positive, supportive cultures and environments to enable motivated teachers.

2.6 Individual Teacher Factors Influencing Motivation

At the individual level, teacher motivation is also shaped by factors including autonomy, empowerment, workload manageability, classroom management challenges, job satisfaction, and emotional health (Yang et al., 2019). Heavy workloads strain even motivated teachers. Classroom challenges such as student misconduct frustrate teachers. Positive emotions like pride and fulfillment increase motivation, while pervasive negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, and sadness decrease motivation. Teachers need adequate autonomy and input into school decisions to feel empowered and motivated. Thus schools should promote reasonable workloads, autonomy, and job satisfaction to support motivated teachers (Fute et al., 2022).

2.7 Theoretical Frameworks on Teacher Motivation

In addition to categorizing the multifaceted factors that can influence teacher motivation, this study is also grounded in several key theories of motivation that further elucidate the roots of motivation and engagement. These include Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's two-factor theory, Vroom's expectancy theory, Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory, and McGregor's Theory X and Y.

2.8 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's 1943 theory of motivation categorizes human needs into a progressive hierarchy spanning basic physiological needs up through self-actualization needs (Dohlman et al., 2019). Lower level basic and psychological needs must be met first before higher esteem and self-actualization needs drive motivation. This suggests that foundational teacher needs like adequate compensation, job security, and safe working conditions must be addressed before higher growth and advancement motivators can be effective. Maslow's theory illustrates the multi-tiered nature of human motivation.

2.9 Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg's 1959 two-factor theory further categorizes factors that influence motivation into hygiene factors that prevent dissatisfaction versus motivators that increase satisfaction (Herzberg, 1959). Hygiene factors include compensation, job security, working conditions, supervision, and interpersonal relationships. Motivators include achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, and the work itself.

Herzberg argues both hygiene and motivator factors must be properly addressed to optimize motivation. This aligns with examining both extrinsic contextual and policy factors as well as intrinsic teacher psychological and work perception factors.

2.10 Vroom's Expectancy Theory

In contrast to the content-focused models above, Vroom's expectancy theory adopts a cognitive process-focused approach. The theory highlights that motivation depends on perceived links between efforts, successful performance, and valued rewards (Lunenburg, 2011). When these alignments are strong, motivation is enhanced. This underscores designing education policies, leadership approaches, and school reward systems that effectively recognize teacher efforts and achievements. Their motivation partly depends on the anticipated outcomes of their work.

2.11 Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory focuses on autonomous intrinsic motivation versus controlled extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). More autonomous motivation fosters greater engagement and performance. However, extrinsic factors can also be internalized to varying degrees to support motivation. This emphasizes the importance of school cultures supporting teacher autonomy and self-direction as well as purposefully integrating external standards and incentives without undermining intrinsic motivation.

2.12 McGregor's Theory X and Y

Finally, McGregor's theory categorizes authoritarian, directive leadership styles versus participative, empowering leadership approaches. Theory X views employees as lazy and passive, needing close oversight. Theory Y views employees as actively engaged, valuing responsibility and achievement (Dharejo & Dharejo, 2022). Authoritarian school leaders can undermine teacher motivation, while empowering leaders improve teacher motivation. This highlights the need for school administration approaches that align with Theory Y assumptions.

2.13 Teacher Motivation in China

Within the Chinese education context specifically, an analysis by Liu, Zhao, & Xie outlined key challenges undermining teacher motivation across China (Liu, Zhao, & Xie, 2016). These included low social status

and respect for teaching, limited professional development opportunities, lack of empowerment and input into policies, focus on standardized testing over holistic instruction, poor compensation, challenging student behaviors, and heavy workloads. To improve motivation, they recommended reforms addressing both school level factors and system level policies. Xuan examined how teaching climate and support influenced motivation among rural teachers in China (Xuan, 2023). Key motivators included shared school vision, colleague relationships, professional learning communities, instructional autonomy, and administrative support. Demotivators included resource shortages, student misconduct, authoritarian leadership, and evaluation pressures. This aligns with both environmental and psychological factors. A study by Xiaofu & Qiwen with primary and secondary teachers highlighted compensation, social respect for teachers, resource adequacy, professional advancement pathways, positive leadership, and collaborative cultures as key to morale and engagement (Xiaofu & Qiwen, 2007). Lack of policy and social supports for teachers undermined their motivation. Xuehui analyzed survey data from rural middle school teachers in a northern Chinese province (Xuehui, 2018), finding that salary, social status, job stability, working conditions, and support resources significantly predicted motivation and job satisfaction. This study aims to further examine whether similar predictors influence southern Chinese teachers.

## 2.14 Synthesis and Research Gaps

Research consistently finds that both extrinsic factors encompassing education system policies, school leadership practices, compensation/ incentive structures, resources, and sociocultural conditions, as well intrinsic factors relating to autonomy, empowerment, competency, relatedness, recognition, and sense of purpose shape teacher motivation (Fute et al., 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2020). While many studies focus on a subset of factors, this study incorporates a comprehensive framework encompassing multi-level influences. This is supported by conceptual theories highlighting the diverse sources of human motivation. Furthermore, there remains limited empirical research examining teacher motivation utilizing large-scale survey methodology, especially in the Chinese cultural context. Many studies rely on small qualitative samples, restricting generalizability. Finally, few studies investigate both urban and rural school contexts or compare motivation across different teacher demographics. This study aims to address these gaps through quantitative

analysis of how school location, policies, environments, resources, leadership, compensation, workloads, autonomy, and relationships interrelate and predict motivation levels among a large sample of southern Chinese public middle school teachers diverse in background.

2.15 Conceptual Frameworks

This study is informed by several key theories of motivation including Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's two-factor theory, Vroom's expectancy theory, Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory, and McGregor's Theory X and Y. These theories explain different facets of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and shed light on the diverse factors that can influence workplace attitudes, behaviors, and performance. Herzberg's two-factor theory categorizes factors that affect job satisfaction and engagement into two groups: motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators such as achievement, recognition, and career advancement promote job satisfaction and motivation. Hygiene factors such as compensation, working conditions, and job security prevent dissatisfaction but do not directly improve motivation (Herzberg, 1959). This theory asserts that both motivators and hygiene factors need to be properly addressed to optimize employee motivation. In contrast, Vroom's expectancy theory focuses more on the cognitive processes and calculations that explain motivation. The theory highlights that motivation is enhanced when there is a clear link between efforts, successful performance, and valued rewards (Lunenburg, 2011). This emphasizes the importance of proper recognition and rewards systems in maintaining high motivation. Meanwhile, Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory examines autonomous/intrinsic versus controlled/extrinsic motivations and factors that cultivate internal drive versus external pressures. Highly self-determined, intrinsically motivated behaviors lead to greater engagement and performance (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Extrinsic factors can also be internalized to varying degrees to support motivation. Finally, McGregor's Theory X and Y categorizes authoritarian versus participative management approaches based on assumptions about human motivations. Theory X views employees as lazy and passive, needing strict oversight, while Theory Y views employees as actively engaged, valuing responsibility (Dharejo & Dharejo, 2022). These different perspectives shape leadership styles and workplace cultures. Together these theories inform a multifaceted examination of the diverse range of intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing teacher motivation in southern Chinese public middle schools. The factors are categorized into

sociocultural influences, education system policies, school-level policies and environments, and individual teacher perceptions and needs to better understand their varying effects on motivation (Figure 1).
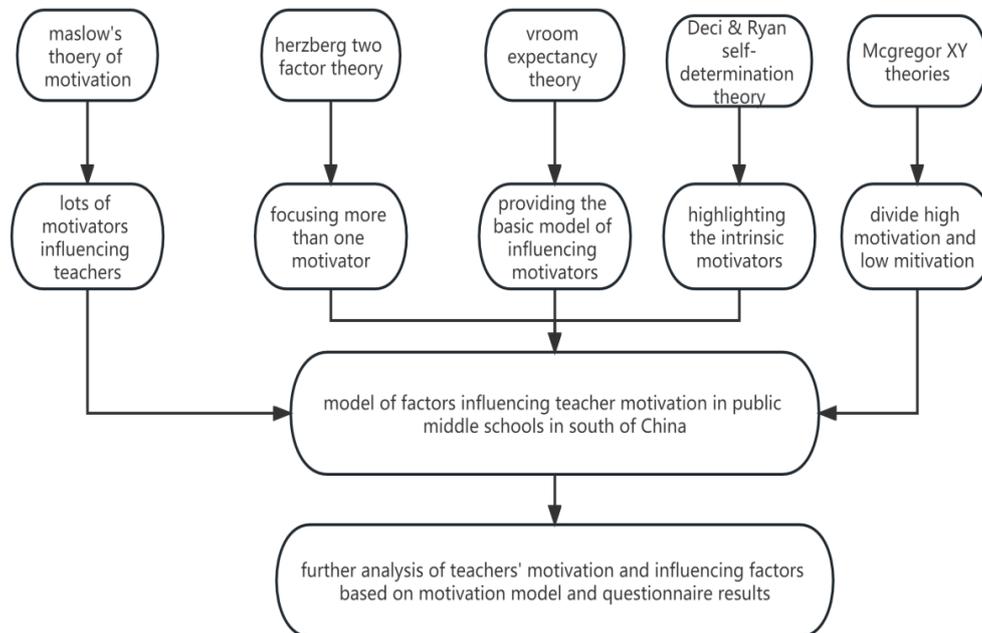
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

2.16 Hypotheses

Based on the preceding literature review, the following hypotheses will be examined:

H1: There is a positive relationship between intrinsic motivational factors (e.g., autonomy, competency, relatedness, recognition, empowerment) and teacher motivation levels in southern Chinese public middle schools.

H2: There is a positive relationship between extrinsic motivational factors (e.g., compensation, professional development, leadership support, resources, mentoring) and teacher motivation levels in southern Chinese public middle schools.

H3: School contextual factors (e.g., urban/rural location, socioeconomics), education policies, school leadership and supports, and teacher workload, emotional health, and job satisfaction significantly predict teacher motivation levels in southern Chinese public middle schools.

H4: There are significant differences in teacher motivation levels across groups based on gender, age, years of experience, education level, and rural/urban school location.

This literature review has provided an analysis and synthesis of previous theory and research on factors shaping teacher motivation. The review revealed key gaps this study aims to address through in-depth investigation of how these multifaceted intrinsic, extrinsic, contextual, policy, leadership, resource, workload, and demographic factors relate to public middle school teacher motivation in southern China. Examining these relationships will provide data-driven recommendations for enhancing teacher motivation and education quality in this context.

3. METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study aims to investigate factors influencing teacher motivation in public middle schools in southern China, using a survey methodology. The sample consists of 1200 teachers selected through stratified random sampling based on age, gender, experience, and school location. Data is collected using two instruments – the Teacher Motivation Assessment Scale (Aksoy, 2006) to measure teacher motivation levels, and a self-constructed Factors Influencing Teacher Motivation Questionnaire to measure contextual, systemic, school, and teacher factors impacting motivation. The instruments use 5-point Likert scale responses and were validated through expert review and pilot testing. Reliability was established through test-retest and calculation of Cronbach's alpha. The quantitative data is analyzed using SPSS software and SmartPLS. SPSS provides descriptive statistics including frequencies, means, and standard deviations to summarize sample and survey characteristics. SmartPLS is used for the structural equation modeling analysis to estimate the measurement model (relationships between indicators and latent variables) and the structural model (relationships between latent variables). SmartPLS is appropriate for predictive analysis and estimating causal models with non-normal data. Inferential statistics including correlation and regression analysis using SPSS test variable relationships and predictions. One-way ANOVA analyzes motivation differences based on demographic factors. A pilot study with 300 teachers was conducted to validate and refine the instruments. This combined use of SPSS and SmartPLS provides both descriptive summaries of the data as well as testing the structural relationships between factors and teacher motivation. The quantitative approach allows collection of broader perspectives from a larger teacher sample. The survey methodology is appropriate for measuring attitudes and

factors influencing motivation numerically. Validated instruments tailored to the Chinese context ensure reliability. The data analysis techniques will provide insights into the factors impacting public middle school teacher motivation in southern China. The pilot study further validates the instruments. In summary, this quantitative survey design with stratified random sampling, validated instrumentation, and descriptive/inferential statistics as well as SmartPLS modeling will provide comprehensive analysis of teacher motivation in the defined context.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Validity and Reliability Analysis

Content validity and face validity evaluate the relevance of individual items and discuss the overall concept with two or more experts in a specific field of study and conduct a pilot test with various subdivisions of the sample or in other ways, as described by Parrott The validity of the contents of the tool or instruments is the extent to which the test seems to be measured by the logical analysis of the items, with emphasis on the instruments applicable to the scope of the study.

Table 1: Result of KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.957
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	15470.200
	Df	105
	Sig.	.000

The validity analysis of this questionnaire was carried out using SPSS26.0, exploratory factor analysis, to implement the testing process. Based on the results of the exploratory factor analysis above, it can be seen that the coefficient result of the KMO test is 0.957. The coefficient of the KMO test takes values in the range of 0-1, and the closer it is to 1 the better the validity of the questionnaire (Table 1).

4.2 Correlation Analysis

The Spearman's correlation coefficients (r) was conducted to determine the relationship amongst the six variables (i.e. Contextual factors, Policy/Systemic factors, School level factors , Teacher level factors, Extrinsic factors, Intrinsic factors and Teacher motivation scale) (Table 2).

Table 2: Ressult of Correlations

		Contextual Factors	Policy/Systemic Factors	School Level Factors	Teacher Level Factors	Extrinsic Factors	Intrinsic Factors	Teacher Motivation Scale
Contextual Factors	Correlation Coefficient		.593**	.533**	.519**	.681**	.519**	.349**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N		1347	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347
Policy/Systemic Factors	Correlation Coefficient	.593**		.697**	.609**	.840**	.609**	.408**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	1347		1347	1347	1347	1347	1347
School Level Factors	Correlation Coefficient	.533**	.697**		.737**	.954**	.737**	.423**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	1347	1347		1347	1347	1347	1347
Teacher Level Factors	Correlation Coefficient	.519**	.609**	.737**		.743**	1.000**	.363**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.	.000
	N	1347	1347	1347		1347	1347	1347
Extrinsic Factors	Correlation Coefficient	.681**	.840**	.954**	.743**		.743**	.464**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	1347	1347	1347	1347		1347	1347
Intrinsic Factors	Correlation Coefficient	.519**	.609**	.737**	1.000**	.743**		.363**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.000		.000
	N	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347		1347
Teacher Motivation Scale	Correlation Coefficient	.349**	.408**	.423**	.363**	.464**	.363**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to the results of the study, there was a stong positive correlation between teacher motivation and contextual factors (r=0.349, p ＜0.05).

Policy/systemic factors (r=0.408, p＜0.05), school level factors (r=0.423, p＜0.05), teacher level factors (r=0.363, p＜0.05) were also positively correlated with teacher motivation. Additionally, extrinsic factors (r=0.464, p＜0.05) and intrinsic factors (r=0.363, p＜0.05) were also positively correlated with teacher motivation.

4.3 Questionnaire Analysis

Table 3: Result of Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std.
Descriptive Statistics	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Deviation Statistic
Extrinsic Factors	1347	12	60	47.32	.283	10.387
Intrinsic Factors	1347	3	15	12.72	.073	2.681
Teacher Motivation Scale	1347	17	70	58.30	.229	8.411
Valid N (Listwise)	1347					

4.4 Influencing Factors over Teacher Job Motivation in the Public Middle Schools in the South of China

1. Which factors (intrinsic and extrinsic factors) most influence teacher motivation in public middle schools in south of China? Is there any relationship between intrinsic factors and teacher motivation in public middle schools in south of China? Is there any relationship between extrinsic factors and teacher motivation in public middle schools in south of China?

4.5 Teachers' Perception about the Influence of Contextual Factors over Teacher Job Motivation in the selected public middle Schools in South of China

Table 4: Contextual Factors that Affect Teachers' Motivation in the Selected Public Middle Schools in South of China

Dimensions	Factors	SA	A	N	D	SD	M	Std.D	Attitude
Contextual Factors	Parent& Societal Support	538	607	71	71	60	4.11	1.026	Agree
	%	39.94	45.06	5.27	5.27	4.45			
	Contextual Instability Crisis	566	596	76	55	54	4.16	0.988	Strongly
	%	42.02	44.25	5.64	4.08	4.01			Agree

According to the statistics, more than four fifths of the people who took the questionnaire demonstrated that their level of motivation is influenced or affected by a variety of context-specific factors (Table 4). These context-specific factors include support from parents and society as well as instability or crisis in the environment (global, national, provincial, or even local government) in which the school is located or the teacher lives. According to the results of the questionnaire, circumstances such as pandemics, political uncertainty, and national insecurities that cause teachers to stop working have a detrimental influence on the motivation of southern Chinese public middle school teachers.

4.6 Teachers' Perception about the Influence of School Level Factors over Teacher Job Motivation in the Selected Public Middle Schools in South of China

Table 5(a): Dimensions

Dimensions	Factors	SA	A	N	D	SD	M	Std.D	Attitude
School Level Factors	Appraisals & Evaluations for Pedagogic Feedbacks	626	482	73	89	77	4.11	1.135	Strongly Agree
	%	46.47	35.78	5.42	6.61	5.72			
	School Management & Prof Conduct	633	513	70	75	56	4.18	1.042	Strongly
	%	46.99	38.08	5.2	5.57	4.16			Agree
	School Location & Infrastructure	384	532	141	208	82	3.69	1.208	Agree
	%	28.51	39.5	10.47	15.44	6.09			
	Teacher Recruitment Practices	313	437	209	293	95	3.43	1.253	Agree
	%	23.24	32.44	15.52	21.75	7.05			
	Leadership Style	494	510	131	143	69	3.90	1.158	Agree

Table 5(b): Dimensions

Dimensions	Factors	SA	A	N	D	SD	M	Std.D	Attitude
School Level	%	36.67	37.86	9.73	10.62	5.12			
Factors	Regular Payment of Salaries	600	460	98	115	74	4.04	1.164	Strongly
	%	44.54	34.15	7.28	8.54	5.49			Agree
	Recognition, Autonomy & Empowerment	627	562	56	48	54	4.23	0.978	Strongly
	%	46.55	41.72	4.16	3.56	4.01			Agree

It indicates that the personality of the head teacher, notably that person's attitude toward the rest of the school staff, appears to have played a considerable effect in influencing teachers' assessments of how easy or difficult their lives are on the whole (Table 5). This indicates that observing, complimenting, and awarding teachers might boost the degree of motivation they have; also, it is essential to offer instructors a decent amount of leeway in addressing specific challenges they meet. This indicates that educators should receive training and be given the authority to make decisions on their own, so that they can be relied upon to operate independently if and when it becomes necessary.

4.7 Teachers' Perception about the Influence of Teacher Level Factors over Teacher Job Motivation in the Selected Public Middle Schools in the South of China

Table 6: Teacher Level Factors that Affect Teachers' Motivation in the Selected Public Middle Schools in the South of China.

Dimensions	Factors	SA	A	N	D	SD	M	Std.D	Attitude
Teacher Level	Rationalized Workload	784	449	38	28	48	4.41	0.922	Strongly
Factors	%	58.2	33.33	2.82	2.08	3.56			Agree
	Capacities to Deal with Classroom Challenges	560	550	87	93	57	4.09	1.063	Strongly
	%	41.57	40.83	6.46	6.9	4.23			Agree

The results of this poll showed that 91.5% of the instructors agreed or strongly agreed that a reduction in their high workload would increase their level of motivation. It is possible to do this by putting into place procedures and structures that are tailored to the specific goal of reducing the amount of work and pressure placed on educators.

To boost their level of motivation, 82.4% of the instructors pointed out that it is important to have the ability to cope with obstacles that may arise in the classroom. This may be assured through training sessions and professional development programs that are built specifically with teachers in mind and focus on their needs. These applications will assist to simplify and organize the issues that are faced in the classroom, which will ultimately lead to an improvement in productivity.

4.8 Teachers' Perception about the Influence of Extrinsic and Intrinsic Factors over Teacher Job Motivation in the Selected Public Middle Schools in the South of China

Table 7: Extrinsic and Intrinsic Factors that Affect Teachers' Motivation in the Selected Public Middle Schools in the South of China.

Types of Motivation	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Extrinsic Motivation	1347	1	5	3.944	1.126
Intrinsic Motivation	1347	1	5	4.243	0.988

The results of the questionnaire are summarized in Table 7, which reveals that the mean score for extrinsic motivation is 3.944, while the mean score for intrinsic motivation is 4.243. The standard deviation for extrinsic motivation is 1.126, while the standard deviation for intrinsic motivation is 0.988. The score of one is the worst that may be received, while the score of five is the best. The highest number of points that may be earned is 5. This indicates that intrinsic motivation is more important for public middle school teachers in the south of China in comparison to extrinsic motivation.

4.9 The Job Motivation Levels of Teachers in Selected Public Middle Schools in the South of China

What are the Job Motivation Levels of Teachers in Selected Public Middle Schools in the South of China?

Table 8: Analysis Result of the Work Motivation Scale

	N	M	SD	MIN	MAX
Total Score for the Work Motivation Scale (WMS)	1347	4.16	0.85	1	5

Following the survey's findings, Table 8 shows that the mean of the work motivation scale scores received from the participants is 4.16, with a standard deviation of 0.85. The lowest possible score is 1 and the greatest possible score is 5. The maximum possible score is 5. Commitment to the

job is demonstrated through social activities, the use of creativity, and the level of responsibility assigned. Personal development encompasses professional training and development opportunities, alternative payment systems, and the revenue generated by my schools. While the results are comparable, teachers' motivation was found to be high in the dimensions of job integration, team harmony, and commitment to the job, but low in the dimension of personal development.

Table 9: The Dimensional Analysis of the Motivation Level of Public Middle School Teachers in the Selected Public Middle Schools in South of China

Work Motivation Scale Dimensions	M	StdD
Team Harmony	4.27	0.756
Integration with the Job	4.13	0.883
Commitment to the Job	4.17	0.81
Personal Development	4.21	0.872

Table 9 summarizes teachers' perceptions of their job motivation level in terms of the work motivation scale dimensions. These public middle school teachers exhibit the highest levels of job motivation in the dimension of team harmony (M=4.27) and the lowest levels of job motivation in the dimension of integration with the job (M=4.13), according to the findings. Meanwhile, they also show a relatively high levels of job motivation in the dimensions of commitment to the job and personal development, which is M=4.17 and M=4.21 respectively.

4.9.1 Specifying the Structural Model

The structural model, also known as the interior model, represents the relationship between constructs or latent variables. The structural model for this study, as described in chapters one and three, is based on Maslow's theory of motivation, Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg, 1959), Vroom's expectancy theory, Deci & Ryan's self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), and McGregor's XY theory. The structural model is depicted in Figure 4.2, which depicts the relationships between the proposed constructs of the integrated model. The model is comprised of three main conceptual components: extrinsic factors, intrinsic factors, and teacher motivation.

4.9.2 Specifying the Measurement Models

The measurement model, or the outer model, explains the relationship between the constructs and the indicator variables. Since the constructs are not directly observed, each construct's measurement model should be

specifically explained. The reflective measurement model was used, where the construct is a trait explaining the indicators. Apart from that, the indicators are representative of the consequences of a construct instead of being the cause of making the construct. Six constructs were included based on the conceptual framework and the assessment of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) in the pilot study phase that is elaborated in chapter three. The constructs were extrinsic factors (including contextual factors, policy/systemic factors and school level factors), intrinsic factors (which is teacher level factors) and teacher motivation. Multiple indicators measured all constructs. All of them were categorized as reflective measurement models indicated by their arrows that point from the construct to the indicators (Figure 2)
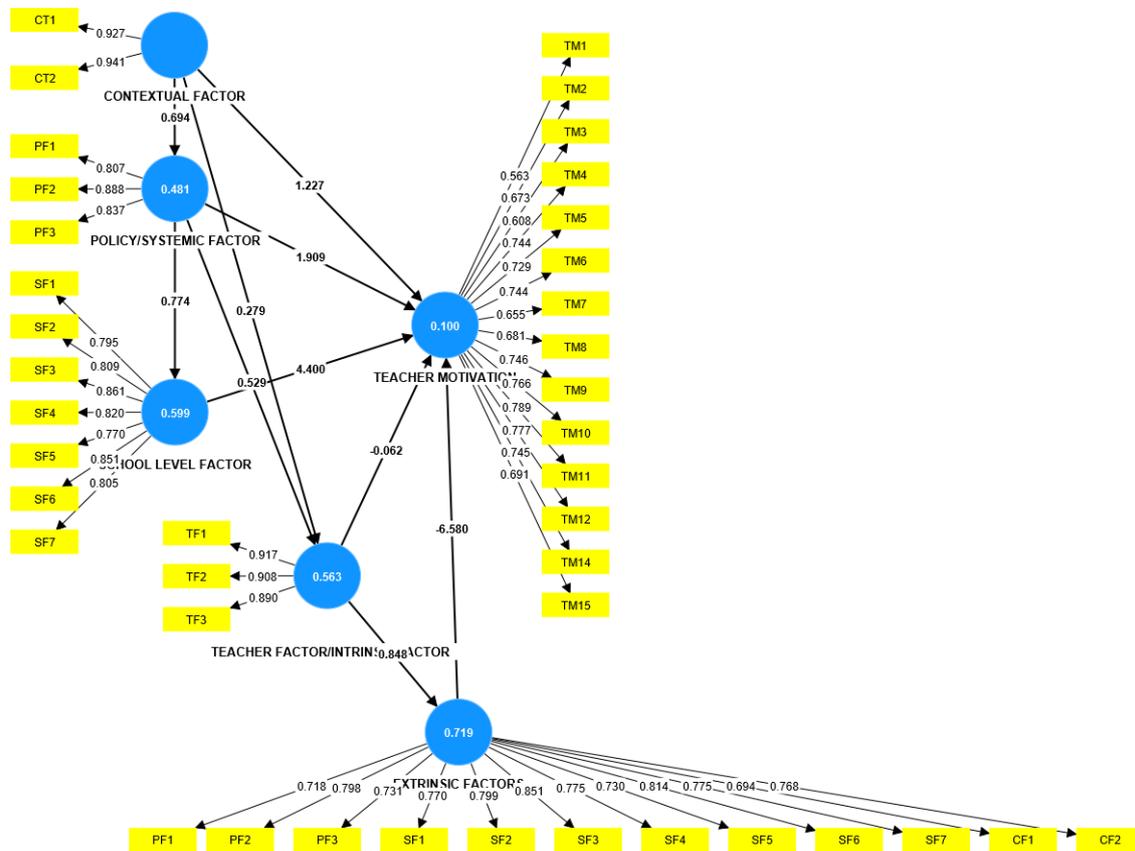

Figure 2: Integrated Proposed Model of the Study

Reflective indicators can be seen as samples representing all possible indicators available in this study within the constructs' conceptual domain (Hair et al., 2017). For example, the construct of policy / systemic factors is measured by three reflective indicators (PF1, PF2, PF3), School level factors is measured by seven reflective indicators (SF1, SF2, SF3, SF4, SF5, SF6, SF7), and Teacher Motivation is measured by fifteen reflective indicators (TM1 to TM15). Because all reflective measures influence all

indicators caused by similar constructs, indicators related to a particular construct should be positively correlated. The overall path model for this study was performed displayed. The figure portrays the inter-connection between constructs and the indicator variables, referred to as the hypotheses elaborated earlier in chapter 1 in this study.

Table 10: Construct

Construct	Indicators	No of Indicators
Contextual Factor	CF1 CF2	2
Policy/Systemic Factor	PF1 PF2 PF3	3
School Level Factor	SF1 SF2 SF3 SF4 SF5 SF6 SF7	7
Extrinsic Factor	CF1 CF2 PF1 PF2 PF3 SF1 SF2 SF3 SF4 SF5 SF6 SF7	12
Intrinsic Factor (Teacher Level Factor)	TF1 TF2 TF3	3
Teacher Motivation	TM1 TM2 TM3 TM4 TM5 TM6 TM7 TM8 TM9 TM10 TM11 TM12 TM13TM14 TM15	15

The evaluation of the path included a two-step process. Step one was referred to as evaluating the measurement models, stage 5 of the PLS-SEM used in this study. Step two was stage 6 or the assessment of the structural model (Table 10). The measurement model assessment allows the evaluation of the construct measures' reliability and validity after the evaluation of pilot study data analysis, which was elaborated earlier. After testing the reliability and validity, the structural models were then put into the evaluation processes. The evaluation involved the process (Hair et al., 2017) of the assessment of path significance (β) and the coefficient of determination (R^2 values).

4.9.3 PLS Path Model Estimation

In this model estimation stage, the PLS-SEM algorithm was calculated. The PLS algorithm provided three key results, which were:

(1) The outer loadings for the measurement model;

(2) The path coefficients for the structural model relationships; and

(3) The R^2 values of the latent endogenous variables are extrinsic factors and intrinsic factors during teaching motivation.

In this stage, the researcher determined whether the conceptual models of the study are valid. Besides, by assessing the relative sizes of the path relationship's significance, it is possible to have statements about the relative importance of the exogenous latent variables in predicting the endogenous latent variable. The result details of this process were

elaborated in the evaluation of the measurement models and the structural model's assessment.

4.9.4 Assessing PLS-SEM Results of the Reflective Measurement Model

Measurement model assessment was the examination process of the reliability and validity of the construct measures. Four reflective measurement models (reflective indicator loading, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity) were examined when assessing the reflective measurement model, as elaborated earlier.

Table 11: Factors

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Contextual Factor	0.855	0.861	0.932	0.873
Extrinsic Factors	0.937	0.94	0.946	0.592
Policy/Systemic Factor	0.798	0.803	0.882	0.713
School Level Factor	0.916	0.918	0.933	0.666
Teacher Factor/Intrinsic Factor	0.889	0.891	0.931	0.819
Teacher Motivation	0.925	0.935	0.934	0.505

4.9.5 Assessing PLS-SEM Results of the Structural Model (Stage 6)

After the assessment of the reflective measurement models proposed in this study that resulted in reliable and valid constructs, the assessment of the structural model was done to answer the first research objective;

1. To find out the best factors (intrinsic and extrinsic factors) which influence teacher motivation in public middle schools in south of China. To identify the relationship between variables in intrinsic factors and teacher motivation in public middle schools in south of China. To identify the relationship between variables in extrinsic factors and teacher motivation in public middle schools in south of China.

2. To identify job motivation levels of teachers in selected public middle schools in south of China

3. To identify the difference in the aspect of gender, age, marital status, tenure of office, educational level, professional development in its

relationship to all variables.

This part is presented to explain the relationship between extrinsic / intrinsic factors and teacher motivation among public middle school teachers in south of China. The main hypothesis of the 1st research question is (H1) there is a positive relationship between extrinsic / intrinsic factors and teacher motivation among public middle school teachers in south of China and intrinsic factors influence most. It includes five sub-hypotheses (Figure 3).
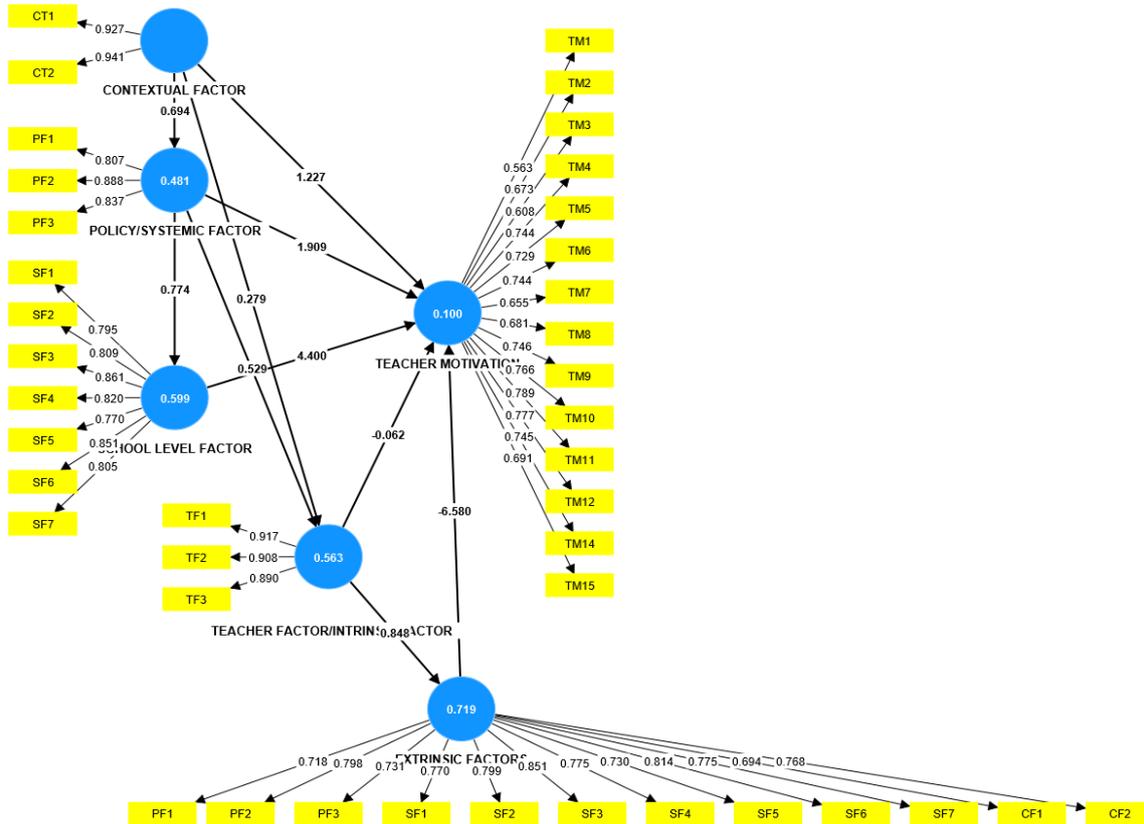

Figure 3: PLS-SEM of factors influencing teacher job motivation

Although the 1st research objective of this study is to inform the relationship between extrinsic / intrinsic factors and teacher motivation among public middle school teachers in south of China, the researcher conducted a thorough process that also involved the examination of teacher motivation inter-correlations. They have been discussed to be very important in studies involving extrinsic factors and intrinsic factors. The result informs that intrinsic factors was significantly related to teacher motivation, and extrinsic factors. To answer the first research question of how factors influencing teacher motivation, PLS-SEM was applied to assess the relationship. The results revealed that intrinsic factors becomes the best predictor, followed by extrinsic factors for teacher motivation in the context of south of China. The result is significant to see the roles of

extrinsic / intrinsic factors in determining teacher motivation in south of China during education as one of the main research objectives of the current study.

5. DISCUSSION

This research examines the challenges faced by the public middle school system in south China and the impact on the job motivation of teachers. It identifies four dimensions of factors that could help increase teacher job morale and motivation. The study reveals that teachers often feel irrelevant to the government and receive preferential treatment in different locations. Certain policies have also negatively impacted schools, and some schools lack adequate physical and instructional materials. The study also explores factors contributing to teachers' motivation, such as contextual factors, policy/systemic factors, and school-level factors. Community support varies by community, and city-level crises can destabilize school plans. Teachers' motivation is influenced by their leader's style and the relationship between them and their headteachers. Public middle school teachers in south China have a strong bond with colleagues and the government, and government support, such as housing aids, meal allowances, transportation allowances, and food provision, is essential for their well-being. However, many teachers believe they have no obligation to provide support to public school teachers, and they are often surprised and grateful when it occurs. The study also reveals that teachers' job motivation is highly individual, with varying degrees of commitment within the same school. Some teachers believe it is their responsibility to provide knowledge to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, while others find fulfillment in teaching in more difficult conditions. The study found that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence teacher motivation in southern Chinese public middle schools. Intrinsic factors like responsibility and the nature of work were key motivators. Extrinsic factors like compensation, administration, and working conditions were major demotivators. This aligns with Herzberg's two-factor theory on motivators and hygiene factors. Teachers had lower motivation associated with extrinsic versus intrinsic factors. The study concludes that multifaceted factors shape teacher motivation, including both satisfiers and dissatisfiers contrary to Herzberg's theory. Motivation is influenced by individual perceptions and environments. Overall, southern Chinese public middle school teachers have low motivation levels, negatively impacting teaching,

school outcomes, and education quality. Demographic factors like education level and position impacted motivation, unlike gender, age, marital status, and experience.

6. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that teachers in the south of China have low work motivation and job satisfaction levels, which is a significant issue in schools during the COVID-19 crisis. This is contrary to previous research, which found that teachers with high motivation and job satisfaction levels are more likely to be motivated and satisfied. Teachers value adequate compensation, assistance, and remuneration as the principal extrinsic motivational factors. However, factors such as lack of approval for professional development programs, social support, promotion opportunities, poor retirement pay, and frequent changes in educational policies contribute to teachers' lower motivation and satisfaction. The Ministry of Education policy aims to provide teachers with professional development opportunities, adequate compensation, and remuneration, but these factors have not been adequately addressed. Teachers are more satisfied with their coworkers than with students and parents of their students. The study concludes that a complex array of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors shape public middle school teacher motivation in southern China. Motivation is an individualized, context-dependent phenomenon requiring coordinated efforts across systemic, school, and individual levels to strengthen.

6.1 Implications

The study implies that optimizing teacher motivation requires addressing both extrinsic demotivators and cultivating intrinsic motivators. Policymakers and school administration need to tackle compensation, resource adequacy, professional development, leadership support, and other hygiene factors. But intrinsic motivators like responsibility, growth, and achievement also need fostering through teacher autonomy, recognition, and advancement opportunities. Holistic teacher motivation strategies should involve coordinated systemic, school, and individual efforts.

6.2 Future Directions

Future research should further examine relationships between student

behaviors and teacher motivation, developing teacher leadership identity and behaviors, provincial education bureau's role in motivation, professional development's impact, national/regional motivational variations, and optimizing intrinsic motivation despite extrinsic constraints. Given the fundamental role of education in national development, ongoing investigation to strengthen teacher motivation is critically needed.

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