EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF STRESS ON TURNOVER INTENTION AMONG CHINESE UNIVERSITY LECTURERS: MEDIATING EFFECTS OF BURNOUT, WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT, AND SATISFACTION

Yan Ye*
yan.ye@stamford.edu

Assistant Professor, Director for PG Programs in Educational Administration,
Graduate School, Stamford International University, Prawet, Bangkok 10250 Thailand
*Corresponding author E-mail: yan.ye@stamford.edu

Received: November 25, 2025 **Revised:** December 21, 2025 **Accepted:** December 23, 2024

Citation reference :
Ye, Y. (2025). Exploring the impact of stress on turnover intention among Chinese university lecturers: Mediating effects of burnout, work–family conflict, and satisfaction. **International Journal of Industrial Education and Technology**. **7** (2), 86 - 102

ABSTRACT

Over recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the attrition rate among university lecturers in China. Numerous reasons, including high work stress, low salaries, and a rigorous performance appraisal system, have led to this phenomenon. The study aims to investigate the impact of stress on the turnover intention of Chinese university lecturers specifically examining the mediating effects of burnout, work-family conflict, and satisfaction. The researcher used a questionnaire to collect data and surveyed a total of 387 university lecturers from eight universities in China. Using SmartPLS 4.0 software, the researcher tested the hypotheses and analysed the mediating effects through partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The study that all the constructs, except work-family conflict, were able to impact lecturers' turnover intention significantly. Furthermore, stress was found to indirectly affect lecturers' turnover intention through both burnout and satisfaction. This study can provide insights for higher education administrators and policymakers.

Keywords: Stress, Turnover intention, Burnout, Work-family conflict, Satisfaction, PLS-SEM, Mediation

I. INTRODUCTION

In the current era of the global knowledge economy, it is essential for countries to enhance their core competitiveness by investing in the advancement of higher education (Altbach, 2013, pp. 316-330). The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (MOE of PRC) has launched a higher education development program to develop selected outstanding universities into world-class leading universities, and this decision also raises the requirements for university lecturers. MOE of PRC has implemented reforms to the personnel policy and lecturers' responsibility in higher education to enhance the quality alongside the expansion of higher education (Yin & Ke, 2017, pp. 1145-1158). The Implementation Program for Deepening Comprehensive Reforms in the Field of Education, released by MOE of PRC in 2014, requires university lecturers to take on heavier teaching and research tasks, further exacerbating the conflict between teaching and research among Chinese university lecturers (Lai et al., 2014, pp. 966-979). Therefore, establishing a modern Chinese higher education system brings new challenges to Chinese university lecturers (Han et al., 2021 pp. 247-262).

Higher education lecturers often confront numerous challenges that significantly impact their professional development and effectiveness in the academic setting, especially in China. Since the 1990s, Chinese universities have introduced the U.S. tenure system, referring to a teacher employment system in which universities grant tenure to eligible faculty members, guaranteeing their academic freedom and other rights so that faculty members are no longer restricted by employment contracts (Herbert & Tienari, 2013, pp. 157-173; Wang & Wang, 2024, pp. 1-11). However, tenure is currently only practiced in several of China's leading universities, resulting in a situation where implementation contracts coexist with tenure, which creates a problem where academic promotion is more difficult in China compared to other countries (Wang & Jones, 2021, pp. 49-66; Yang et al., 2024, pp. 476-492). Chinese universities implement a rigorous evaluation system encompassing both academic and teaching assessments. To improve schools' academic rankings and obtain financial support from the government, Chinese universities have adopted performance evaluation and incentive systems to compel university faculty to produce more academic outputs (Tian et al., 2016, pp. 9-17).

Driven by Chinese policies oriented towards teaching and academic output, university lecturers are assigned more teaching and research tasks by their institution, leading to a notable increase in stress levels (Tian & Lu, 2017, pp. 957-974). Regarding teaching work, the requirements for reforms and innovations from university and government policy have caused university lecturers to face increased teaching workloads and adaptation to new teaching strategies and technologies (Han et al., 2021, pp. 247-262). Regarding research work, insufficient research funding given by the university or government is a pain point for university lecturers, who generally feel that there needs to be more financial support for their research activities (Du et al., 2010, pp. 430-449). Regarding career advancement, many Chinese universities practice an "Up-or-out" system, with fierce competition for both lecturer and professor positions, and the limited number of positions makes it so that many university lecturers often have to wait until the retirement of older lecturers before they can be promoted (Lai et al., 2016, pp. 516-530). New university lecturers face the expectation of meeting

specific publication requirements within a designated timeframe in reputable international indexed journals, which can potentially yield enhanced salary and promotion prospects, while failing to meet these expectations may result in job termination upon contract expiration (Qiu, 2010, p. 142; Tian et al., 2016, pp. 9-17; Wang et al., 2023, pp. 2066-2079). As a result of high levels of stress and burnout, Chinese university lecturers have a high turnover rate, resulting in severe educational problems, including low retention and a shortage of university lecturers (Wang et al., 2023, pp. 2066-2079). Overemphasizing competition, performance, and a ruthless phaseout system has also led university lecturers to be more concerned with short-term research outputs and the number of journal publications, neglecting the quality and value of research and sacrificing lecturers' personal development and academic freedom (Henkel, 2005, pp.155-176; Yang et al., 2007, pp. 575-592). As a result, some Chinese university lecturers have a high turnover intention, which poses a significant challenge to developing higher education (Zhang et al., 2022, pp. 1-18).

The primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of stress on turnover intention among Chinese university lecturers. In addition, the study aims to investigate the mediating roles of burnout, work–family conflict, and job satisfaction in the relationship between stress and turnover intention, in order to clarify the underlying psychological and organizational mechanisms. By comparing the relative explanatory power of these mediators, the study seeks to identify the key factors through which stress influences lecturers' intentions to leave, thereby providing empirical evidence to inform strategies for improving faculty well-being and retention in higher education.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Stress has long been recognized as a foundational construct in organizational and educational psychology, referring to the emotional and physiological responses individuals experience when external demands exceed their coping capacities (Lazarus & DeLongis, 1983, pp. 245–254; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 105). In academic settings, teacher stress commonly manifests as anxiety, frustration, and emotional strain resulting from work-related pressures (Kyriacou, 1987, pp. 146–152). For Chinese university lecturers, empirical studies have identified insufficient institutional support, heavy teaching workloads, escalating research expectations, and shifts in evaluation mechanisms as key sources of stress (Lai et al., 2016, pp. 516–530; Tian & Lu, 2017, pp. 957–974; Wei & Ye, 2022, pp. 1–16). Globally, intensifying competition and rapid reforms within higher education have contributed to rising stress levels among faculty (Tytherleigh et al., 2005, pp. 41–61; Watts & Robertson, 2011, pp. 33–50), which have been linked to mental-health decline, impaired performance, and increased turnover intentions (Gillespie et al., 2001, pp. 53–72; Salvagioni et al., 2017, pp. 1–18; Zhang et al., 2019, pp. 414–435). Closely related to occupational stress is work-family conflict, a form of inter-role tension arising when work and family responsibilities become mutually incompatible. Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985, pp. 267–278) tripartite model illustrates time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based forms of conflict, all of which are prevalent among Chinese faculty as demanding work schedules increasingly intrude on personal life (Rajendran et al., 2020, pp. 1–24). This conflict has been associated with reduced job satisfaction,

heightened turnover intention, and diminished well-being (Allen et al., 2000, pp. 278–308; Cinamon & Rich, 2005, pp. 365–378). Burnout, conceptualized as a chronic and maladaptive response to prolonged stress, further compounds these challenges. Defined by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment (Freudenberger, 1989, pp. 1–10; Maslach et al., 2001, pp. 397–422), burnout is frequently explained through the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework, which posits that excessive job demands combined with inadequate resources accelerate emotional strain (Schaufeli et al., 2001, pp. 565–582; Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021, pp. 103–221; Wang et al., 2020, pp. 1314–1328). Chinese university lecturers, operating within increasingly competitive academic environments, are particularly vulnerable to burnout due to sustained workloads and limited support (Zhong et al., 2009, pp. 1248–1254). Job satisfaction is defined as individuals' evaluative judgments of their work conditions (Weiss, 2002, pp. 173–194), represents another core variable shaping faculty well-being and organizational behavior. Influenced by factors such as work environment, autonomy, compensation, and advancement opportunities (Coomber & Barriball, 2007, pp. 297–314), job satisfaction has been linked to improved performance, organizational commitment, and professional engagement (Aziri, 2011, pp. 77–80; Bogler, 2001, pp. 662–683; Meyer et al., 2002, pp. 20–52).

Grounded in stress theory and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, this study examines the impact of stress on turnover intention among Chinese university lecturers while analyzing the mediating roles of burnout, work-family conflict, and job satisfaction. The conceptual framework, presented in Figure 1 below. Specifically, the study proposes a series of hypotheses to capture these relationships: H1, stress has a significant impact on turnover intention; H1a, stress significantly influences work-family conflict; H1b, stress significantly influences burnout; H1c, stress significantly influences job satisfaction. Additionally, H2, work-family conflict significantly affects turnover intention; H2a, work-family conflict significantly affects burnout; H2b, work-family conflict significantly affects job satisfaction. Further, H3, burnout significantly affects turnover intention; H3a, burnout significantly affects job satisfaction. Finally, H4, job satisfaction significantly affects turnover intention. Together, these hypotheses enable a comprehensive examination of the mechanisms through which stress exerts its influence on turnover intention, providing a theoretically grounded and empirically testable model for understanding faculty well-being and retention in Chinese higher education.

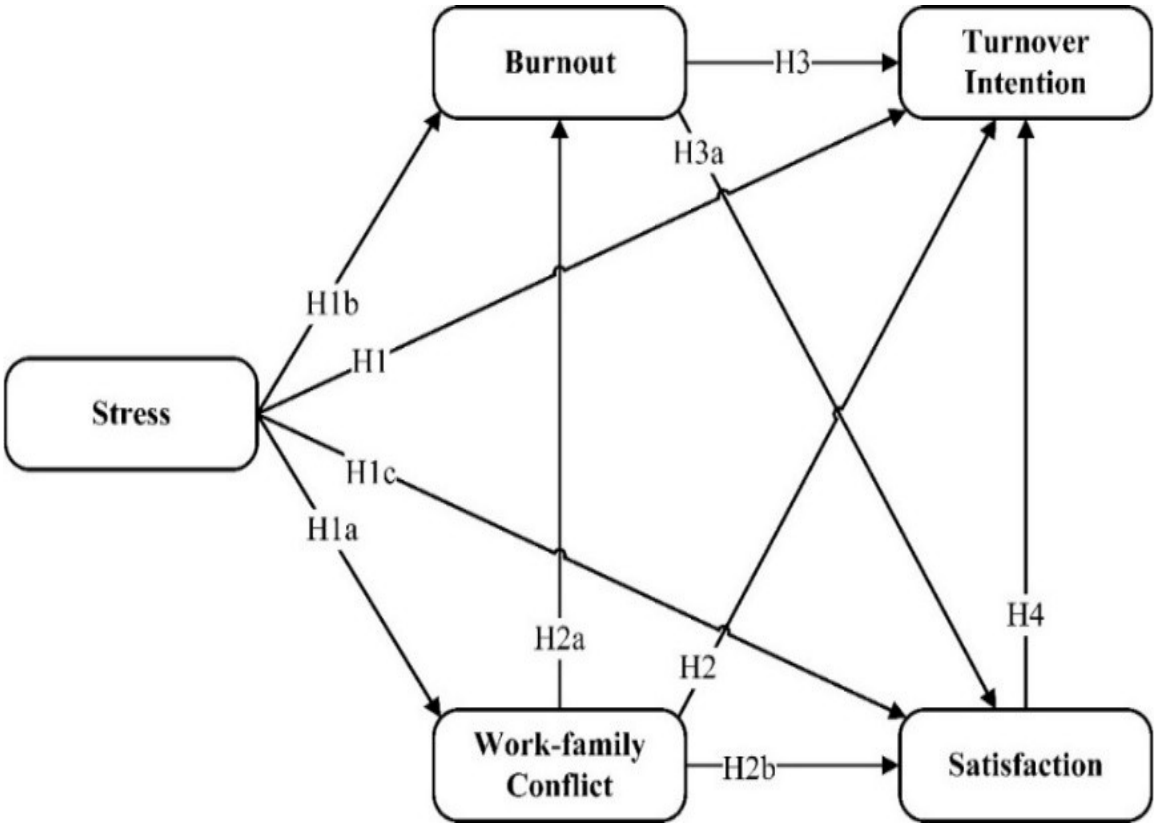

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of this study

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants in the present study consisted of Chinese full-time lecturers in 8 designated respective universities from 4 big provinces of China, including Henan, Shandong, Hunan, Zhejiang province. The total population reached 18,905, while the sample of participants was 387 based on Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) sample method.

The study used a questionnaire as the primary research instrument, the researcher developed the web-based questionnaire using the WJX platform and then distributed it using QR codes on WeChat, QQ, and other social media platforms. Through the snowball sampling, the researcher asked participants to aid in distributing the questionnaire to their colleagues or acquaintances after completing their own questionnaire responses.

The participants in the present study consisted of Chinese full-time lecturers in 8 designated respective universities from 4 big provinces of China, including Henan, Shandong, Hunan, Zhejiang province. The total population reached 18,905, while the sample of participants was 387 based on Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) sample method.

The study used a questionnaire as the primary research instrument, the researcher developed the web-based questionnaire using the WJX platform and then distributed it using QR codes on WeChat, QQ, and other social media platforms. Through the snowball sampling, the researcher asked participants to aid in distributing the questionnaire to their colleagues or acquaintances after completing their own questionnaire responses.

Research instrument

The questionnaire was the data collection instrument for this study, and it included three parts: screening questions, demographic questions, and scale items. The screening questions were primarily used to assist with judgmental sampling and consisted of two questions that asked the participant about the university they worked at and their job responsibilities. Only lecturers employed at the 10 designated universities, with responsibilities in teaching and research, were allowed to continue with the following answers. In the second part, the researcher obtained demographic information from the participants, including their gender, educational background, academic title, and teaching experience.

The scale items included five major constructs (stress, burnout, work-family conflict, satisfaction, and turnover intention) adopted by comparable research studies. All scale items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where participants had to choose a number ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

1) Stress: The scale for stress was adapted from Han et al. (2021), namely Sources of Faculty Stress (SFS), which was originally developed by Leung et al. (2000, pp. 121-138). 2) Burnout: The scale used to measure burnout in this study was the Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey (MBIES) designed by Maslach and Jackson (1981, pp. 99-113). 3)Work-Family Conflict: The Work-Family Conflict Scale was derived from the questionnaire created by Netemeyer et al. (1996, pp. 400-410), including ten items. 4) Satisfaction: The satisfaction scale utilized in this study was derived from the Teaching Satisfaction Scale (TSS) developed by Ho and Au (2006, pp. 172-185), consisting of five items. 5) Turnover Intentions: The Turnover Intentions Scale was derived from the four-item questionnaire that Kelloway et al. (1999, pp. 337-346) developed. The Cronbach's alpha values of these scales are all over 0.86, which exceeds the threshold of 0.7, indicating that the scale contains both internal consistency and reliability.

Data analysis

Since the researcher set the questionnaire to be submitted only if all items were answered, there were no missing values in the data of this study. Descriptive statistics were used for determine the levels of lecturer' stress, burnout, work-family conflict, satisfaction, and turnover intention at these Chinese universities. The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is particularly suitable for predictive modeling, where the primary

purpose is to make forecasts or predictions rather than hypothesis testing (Sarstedt et al., 2021, pp. 587-632). Insufficient studies have confirmed the causal relationships between the constructs in this study, and therefore, the model tends to be more of a predictive model. PLS-SEM is better for predicting model outputs than covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB_SEM) when the model is in high order (Dash & Paul, 2021, pp. 1-11). Stress and burnout, composed of seven and three subconstructs, are higher-order constructs with complexity. PLS-SEM is deemed more appropriate for evaluating the model in this research since it offers more accuracy and convenience. Therefore, SPSS 24 was utilized for descriptive analysis of demographic data and scale items, while SmartPLS 4.0 was utilized for reliability testing, hypothesis testing, and mediation effects analysis.

IV. RESULTS

Descriptive statistics analysis

Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics for stress, burnout, work–family conflict, satisfaction, and turnover intention among Chinese university lecturers (N = 387). Overall, respondents reported moderate to high levels across the measured constructs. Stress was reported at a moderate level (M = 3.45, SD = 0.790), indicating noticeable but not extreme work pressure. In contrast, burnout (M = 3.60, SD = 0.776) and work–family conflict (M = 3.52, SD = 0.808) both reached high levels, suggesting substantial emotional exhaustion and role interference among participants. Job satisfaction remained moderate (M = 3.46, SD = 0.699), reflecting neither strong dissatisfaction nor high fulfillment. Turnover intention also fell within the moderate range (M = 3.40, SD = 0.829), indicating a nontrivial inclination to consider leaving the profession. Overall, the findings suggest that elevated burnout and work–family conflict coexist with moderate stress, satisfaction, and turnover intention, providing an important empirical basis for the subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 1: Levels of lecturer' stress, burnout, work-family conflict, satisfaction, and turnover intention

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Stress	387	3.45	0.790	Moderate
Burnout	387	3.60	0.776	High
Work-family conflict	387	3.52	0.808	High
Satisfaction	387	3.46	0.699	Moderate
Turnover intention	387	3.40	0.829	Moderate

Measurement model

Table 2 presents the reliability and convergent validity results at the construct level. All constructs exhibited strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. In addition, average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.544 to 0.742, indicating adequate convergent validity (Hair et al., 2014, pp. 106-121). These results confirm that the measurement model meets established reliability and validity criteria and is suitable for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 2: Reliability and convergent validity of major constructs

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability (ρc)	AVE
Stress	21	0.900	0.920	0.589
Burnout	20	0.895	0.915	0.544
Work–family conflict	8	0.900	0.920	0.589
Satisfaction	4	0.814	0.877	0.641
Turnover intention	4	0.884	0.920	0.742

Note. All constructs demonstrate satisfactory internal consistency and convergent validity (Cronbach's α > 0.70, ρc > 0.70, AVE > 0.50).

Discriminant validity can be established when the square root of the average variation extracted (AVE) of a construct is greater than the correlation coefficient between the other constructs corresponding to it (Fornell & Larcker, 1981, pp. 39-50). Also shown in Table 3, the square roots of all AVEs in this study are greater than their corresponding correlation coefficients. Thus, this study has sufficient discriminant validity. HTMT is a new measure of discriminant validity, and an index of HTMT greater than 0.85 indicates the absence of discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015, pp. 115-135).

Table 3: Fornell–Larcker criterion

	IRPV	POP	IA	RS	TRB	SQ	IC	EE	PA	DEP	SAT	WC	TI
IRPV	**0.809**												
POP	0.366	**0.806**											
IA	0.428	0.431	**0.741**										
RS	0.391	0.400	0.397	**0.905**									
TRB	0.430	0.488	0.473	0.470	**0.803**								
SQ	0.367	0.404	0.378	0.376	0.491	**0.797**							
IC	0.368	0.335	0.350	0.323	0.377	0.345	**0.810**						
EE	0.059	0.096	0.066	0.091	0.090	0.062	0.098	**0.738**					
PA	0.029	0.147	0.077	0.135	0.145	0.079	0.103	0.525	**0.771**				
DEP	0.071	0.128	0.094	0.123	0.147	0.115	0.055	0.431	0.432	**0.821**			
SAT	-0.173	-0.116	-0.167	-0.174	-0.158	-0.145	-0.119	-0.236	-0.188	-0.157	**0.801**		
WC	0.057	0.024	0.049	0.059	0.049	0.011	0.052	0.021	0.040	0.030	-0.284	**0.767**	
TI	0.295	0.240	0.301	0.256	0.295	0.226	0.221	0.360	0.332	0.280	-0.655	0.193	**0.861**

Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) as shown in Table 4 to explain and establish the discriminant validity. HTMT values, as shown in Table 4 ranged from 0.051 to 0.770; thus, the discriminant validity of this study was verified again.

Table 4: HTMT

	IRPV	POP	IA	RS	TRB	SQ	IC	EE	PA	DEP	SAT	WC
IRPV												
POP	0.499											
IA	0.559	0.564										
RS	0.515	0.530	0.502									
TRB	0.590	0.671	0.619	0.624								
SQ	0.506	0.558	0.501	0.503	0.682							
IC	0.499	0.456	0.455	0.424	0.515	0.475						
EE	0.075	0.119	0.087	0.109	0.114	0.080	0.121					
PA	0.052	0.186	0.099	0.165	0.186	0.100	0.134	0.595				
DEP	0.089	0.159	0.113	0.148	0.186	0.145	0.076	0.484	0.495			
SAT	0.220	0.146	0.203	0.219	0.204	0.190	0.151	0.272	0.222	0.183		
WC	0.075	0.051	0.063	0.072	0.081	0.046	0.067	0.064	0.054	0.056	0.329	
TI	0.365	0.298	0.357	0.308	0.369	0.285	0.274	0.405	0.379	0.316	0.770	0.215

Structural model

After establishing the reliability and validity, the researcher tested the hypotheses, as well as the direct and indirect effects by using SmartPLS 4.0 by applying the percentile bootstrap technique with iteratively resampling 5,000 times.

Table 5: Summary of hypothesis testing results

	Path	Original sample (O)	STDEV	T statistics	P values	Decision
H1	STR -> TI	0.222***	0.026	8.425	0.000	Supported
H1a	STR -> WC	0.062	0.037	1.652	0.099	Not Supported
H1b	STR -> BUR	0.162***	0.034	4.709	0.000	Supported
H1c	STR -> SAT	-0.165***	0.033	5.025	0.000	Supported
H2	WC -> TI	0.016	0.026	0.628	0.530	Not Supported
H2a	WC -> BUR	0.026	0.035	0.760	0.448	Not Supported
H2b	WC -> SAT	-0.266***	0.031	8.549	0.000	Supported
H3	BUR -> TI	0.237***	0.025	9.550	0.000	Supported
H3a	BUR -> SAT	-0.212***	0.033	6.491	0.000	Supported
H4	SAT -> TI	-0.543***	0.024	23.037	0.000	Supported

Hypothesis testing results shown in Table 5, it was found that WC cannot significantly influence TI (β = 0.016, t = 0.628, p = 0.530), while satisfaction is the strongest predictor of TI (β = 0.543, t = 23.037, p = 0.000). Besides, BUR (β = 0.237, t = 9.550, p = 0.000) and STR (β = 0.222, t = 8.425, p = 0.000) can also significantly influence TI. As for the hypotheses exploring the relationship between the mediator variables, we found that STR cannot significantly influence WC (β = 0.062, t = 1.652, p = 0.099). In contrast, it can significantly influence BUR (β = 0.162, t = 4.709, p = 0.000) and SAT (β = -0.165, t = 5.025, p = 0.000). WC cannot significantly influence BUR (β = 0.026, t = 0.760, p = 0.448), while it can significantly influence SAT (β = -0.266, t = 8.549, p = 0.000). BUR could also significantly influence SAT (β = -0.212, t = 6.491, p = 0.000).

Table 6: Indirect effects

Path	Specific indirect effects	STDEV	T statistics	P values
Stress -> WC -> TI	0.001	0.002	0.506	0.613
Stress -> WC -> Burnout -> TI	0.000	0.001	0.587	0.557
Stress -> WC -> SAT -> TI	0.009	0.006	1.610	0.107
Stress -> WC -> Burnout -> SAT -> TI	0.000	0.000	0.591	0.554
Stress -> Burnout -> TI	0.038***	0.009	4.137	0.000
Stress -> Burnout -> SAT -> TI	0.019***	0.005	3.803	0.000
Stress -> SAT -> TI	0.090***	0.018	4.976	0.000

Meanwhile, the researcher also analyzed the indirect effects of STR on TI under different paths. As shown in Table 6, of the seven pathways, three had significant indirect effects, with the strongest being 'Stress -> SAT -> TI' (β = 0.090, t = 4.976, p = 0.000), the second strongest being 'Stress -> Burnout -> TI' (β = 0.038, t = 4.137, p = 0.000), and the third being 'Stress -> Burnout -> SAT -> TI' (β = 0.019, t = 3.803, p = 0.000).

The coefficient of determination (R^2) serves as an evaluative metric that quantifies the extent to which the variance observed in the dependent variable can be accounted for by the independent variable (Cohen, 1988). In the current study, the R^2 of TI is 0.540, which indicates that all the independent variables (including the mediator variable) explain 54% of the variance of the dependent variable (TI). Q square (Q^2) is a metric used to judge the predictive relevance of the model, and when Q^2 is greater than 0, it has good predictive relevance. In the current study, the Q^2 of all predicted variables was greater than 0, which proves that the model has a good predictive relevance, with the critical variable TI having a Q^2 of 0.397. The F square (F^2) refers to the change in R^2 when an exogenous variable is removed from the model. When F^2 is greater than 0.02, the effect size is small; when F^2 is greater than 0.15, the effect size is medium; and when F^2 is greater than 0.35, the effect size is large (Cohen, 2014). For the dependent variable of TI, the F^2 of SAT is 0.537, with a high

effect size; the F^2 of BUR and STR are 0.113 and 0.101, with a low effect size; and the F^2 of WC is only 0.001, which is a minimal effect of this exogenous variable on the R^2 of TI, almost none. The final model is showed in Figure 2.

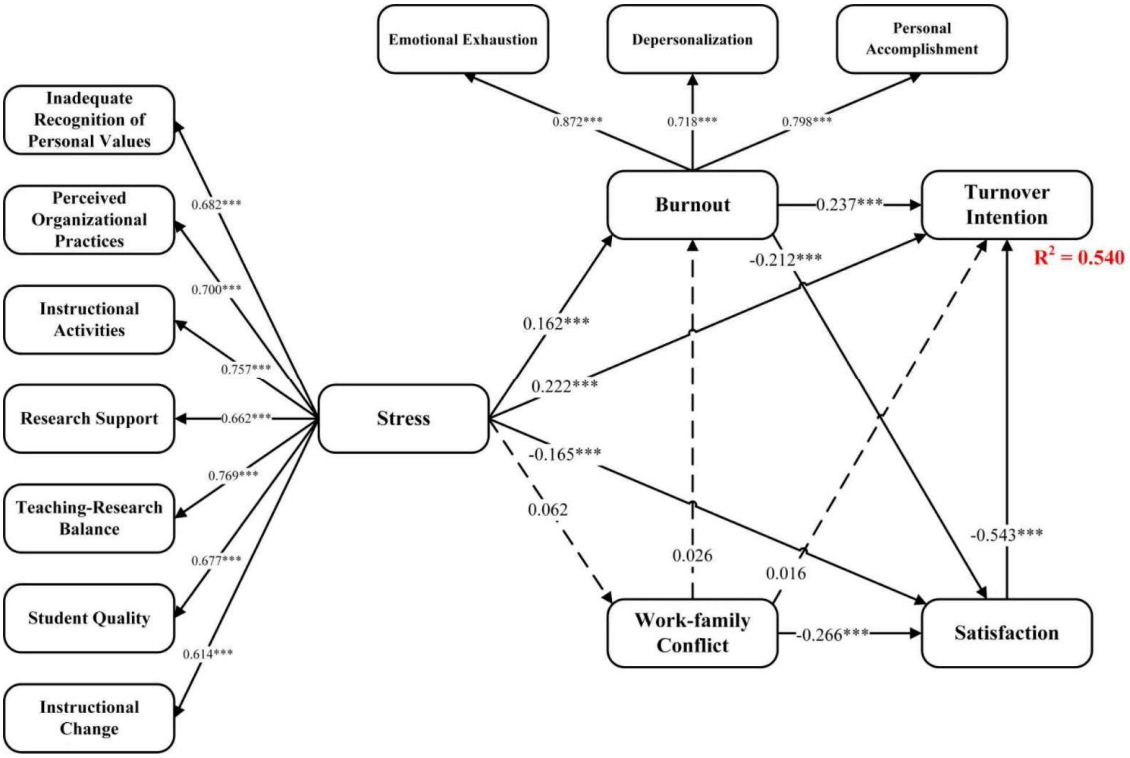

Figure 2: PLS results of this study

V. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study confirms that stress is a critical determinant of turnover intention among Chinese university lecturers, directly increasing their likelihood of considering resignation. Burnout was found to significantly mediate this relationship, demonstrating that prolonged exposure to academic pressure leads to emotional exhaustion, disengagement, and diminished job satisfaction, ultimately heightening turnover intention. Job satisfaction emerged as the strongest negative predictor of turnover intention and was adversely affected by both stress and burnout, indicating a chain effect in which high stress increases burnout, burnout reduces satisfaction, and reduced satisfaction raises the desire to leave. In contrast, work-family conflict did not significantly mediate the relationship between stress and turnover intention, nor did it significantly predict burnout, although it negatively influenced job satisfaction. Overall, the findings highlight that stress reduction, burnout prevention, and satisfaction enhancement are essential for improving teacher retention in China's demanding higher education sector.

The study's findings align with extensive prior research demonstrating that stress is a major predictor of turnover intention in academic settings (Conley & You, 2009, pp. 771-780; Dorenkamp & Wei, 2018, pp. 747-767; Virtanen & Parpala, 2023, pp. 1-9). The intensification of academic evaluation systems, increased workload, and limited institutional resources continue to heighten faculty stress in China, which, in turn, fosters burnout and reduces job satisfaction (Little & Bartlett, 2002, p. 345; Zhang et al., 2019, pp. 414-435). The unexpected non-significant relationship between stress and work-family conflict contrasts with many Western findings (Cinamon & Rich, 2005, pp. 365-378; Rathi & Kumar, 2023, pp. 1-21) and may reflect the influence of collectivist cultural values and Confucian role ethics, which emphasize commitment, responsibility, and perseverance in both work and family roles (Lu & Gilmour, 2007, pp. 249-257). Similarly, the lack of a significant effect of work-family conflict on burnout and turnover intention suggests that Chinese university lecturers may tolerate work-life strain due to job security concerns, especially following the economic instability brought by COVID-19 (Blustein et al., 2020, pp. 1-4), and due to the high social status accorded to university teaching (Gao, 2008, pp. 154-165; Wang, 2020, pp. 1314-1328). Conversely, burnout's strong influence on both job satisfaction and turnover intention reinforces its central role in teacher well-being (Boamah et al., 2022, p. 809; Christian-Brandt et al., 2020, pp. 104-117). As burnout erodes emotional resources, professional fulfillment, and social support, it substantially lowers satisfaction and increases withdrawal tendencies. The study ultimately underscores the need for universities to reduce excessive job demands, provide greater organizational support, and strengthen professional recognition to safeguard teacher well-being and retention.

SUGGESTION

Based on the findings of this study, university administrators and policymakers should adopt targeted strategies to help lecturers manage stress and burnout without compromising work efficiency or academic productivity. Given that burnout and reduced job satisfaction—rather than work–family conflict—were the primary mechanisms linking stress to turnover intention, institutional interventions should focus on psychological sustainability and organizational support. Universities are encouraged to optimize workload allocation and performance evaluation systems by reducing excessive emphasis on short-term research output and recognizing diverse academic contributions, including teaching quality and service roles. Strengthening organizational support through counseling services, stress-management programs, and supportive leadership practices can further mitigate burnout and sustain long-term engagement. At the policy level, higher education authorities should promote governance frameworks that emphasize stable employment, transparent promotion pathways, and balanced accountability, thereby aligning institutional effectiveness with lecturer well-being and ensuring sustainable performance in the academic workforce. For future research, longitudinal studies are highly recommended to explore how stress, burnout, and job satisfaction evolve over time and influence turnover intention in different career stages. Such studies could provide stronger evidence of causality and allow researcher to detect changes and trends more accurately.

REFERENCES

Allen, T., Herst, D., Bruck, C., & Sutton, M. (2000). Consequences Associated With Work-to-Family Conflict: A Review and Agenda for Future Research. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *5*(2), 278-308.

Altbach, P. G. (2013). Advancing the national and global knowledge economy: the role of research universities in developing countries. *Studies in Higher Education*, *38*(3), 316-330.

Aziri, B. (2011). Job satisfaction: A literature review. *Management Research & Practice*, *3*(4), 77-86.

Blustein, D. L., Duffy, R., Ferreira, J. A., Cohen-Scali, V., Cinamon, R. G., & Allan, B. A. (2020). Unemployment in the time of COVID-19: A research agenda. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *119*, 103436, 1-4.

Boamah, S. A., Hamadi, H. Y., Havaei, F., Smith, H., & Webb, F. (2022). Striking a Balance between Work and Play: The Effects of Work-Life Interference and Burnout on Faculty Turnover Intentions and Career Satisfaction. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 19*(2), 809-910.

Bogler, R. (2001). The Influence of Leadership Style on Teacher Job Satisfaction. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *37*(5), 662-683.

Christian-Brandt, A. S., Santacrose, D. E., & Barnett, M. L. (2020). In the trauma-informed care trenches: Teacher compassion satisfaction, secondary traumatic stress, burnout, and intent to leave education within underserved elementary schools. *Child Abuse & Neglect* , *110*(Pt 3), 104-117.

Cinamon, R. G., & Rich, Y. (2005). Work–family conflict among female lecturers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *21*(4), 365-378.

Conley, S., & You, S. (2009). Teacher role stress, satisfaction, commitment, and intentions to leave: a structural model. *Psychol Reports*, *105*(3 Pt 1), 771-786.

Coomber, B., & Barriball, K. L. (2007). Impact of job satisfaction components on intent to leave and turnover for hospital-based nurses: a review of the research literature. *International Jounral of Nursing Studies*, *44*(2), 297-314.

Dash, G., & Paul, J. (2021). CB-SEM vs PLS-SEM methods for research in social sciences and technology forecasting. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, *173*(3), 1-11.

Dorenkamp, I., & Wei, E.-E. (2018). What makes them leave? A path model of postdocs' intentions to leave academia. *Higher Education*, *75*(5), 747-767.

Du, P., Lai, M., & Lo, L. N. K. (2010). Analysis of job satisfaction of university professors from nine Chinese universities. *Frontiers of Education in China*, *5*(3), 430-449.

Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating Structural Equation Models with Unobservable Variables and Measurement Error. *Journal of Marketing Research, 18*(1), 39-50.

Freudenberger, H. J. (1989). Burnout: Past, present, and future concerns. *Loss, Grief & Care*, *3*(1), 1-10.

Gao, X. (2008). Lecturers' professional vulnerability and cultural tradition: A Chinese paradox. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *24*(1), 154-165.

Gillespie, N. A., Walsh, M., Winefield, A. H., Dua, J., & Stough, C. (2001). Occupational stress in universities: Staff perceptions of the causes, consequences and moderators of stress. *Work & Stress*, *15*(1), 53-72.

Greenglass, E. R., Burke, R. J., & Konarski, R. (1997). The impact of social support on the development of burnout in lecturers: Examination of a model. *Work & Stress*, *11*(3), 267-278.

Hair, J. F., Sarstedt, M., Hopkins, L., & G. Kuppelwieser, V. (2014). Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). *European Business Review*, *26*(2), 106-121.

Han, J., Perron, B. E., Yin, H., & Liu, Y. (2021). Faculty stressors and their relations to teacher efficacy, engagement and teaching satisfaction. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *40*(2), 247-262.

Henkel, M. (2005). Academic identity and autonomy in a changing policy environment. *Higher Education*, *49*(1), 155-176.

Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *43*(1), 115-135.

Herbert, A., & Tienari, J. (2013). Transplanting tenure and the (re)construction of academic freedoms. *Studies in Higher Education*, *38*(2), 157-173.

Herzberg, F. (2017). *Motivation to work*. Routledge.

Ho, C.-L., & Au, W.-T. (2006). Teaching Satisfaction Scale:Measuring Job Satisfaction of Lecturers. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *66*(1), 172-185.

Kelloway, E. K., Gottlieb, B. H., & Barham, L. (1999). The source, nature, and direction of work and family conflict: a longitudinal investigation. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *4*(4), 337-346.

Krejcie, R.V., & Morgan, D.W., (1970). Determining Sample Size for Research Activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement.*

Kyriacou, C. (1987). Teacher stress and burnout: an international review. *Educationa Research*, *29*(2), 146-152.

Lai, M., Du, P., & Li, L. (2014). Struggling to handle teaching and research: a study on academic work at select universities in the Chinese Mainland. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *19*(8), 966-979.

Lai, M., Du, P., & Lo, L. N. K. (2016). Restricted opportunities under employment reform: the experiences of select universities in the Chinese Mainland. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *35*(3), 516-530.

Lazarus, R. S., & DeLongis, A. (1983). Psychological stress and coping in aging. *American Psychologist*, *38*(3), 245-254.

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer publishing company.

Leung, T.-w., Siu, O.-l., & Spector, P. E. (2000). Faculty Stressors, Job Satisfaction, and Psychological Distress Among University Lecturers in Hong Kong: The Role of locus of Control. *International Journal of Stress Management*, *7*(2), 121-138.

Little, J. W., & Bartlett, L. (2002). Career and Commitment in the Context of Comprehensive School Reform. *Lecturers and Teaching*, *8*(3), 345.

Lu, L., & Gilmour, R. (2007). Developing a new measure of independent and interdependent views of the self. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *41*(1), 249-257.

Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *2*(2), 99-113.

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job Burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *52*(1), 397-422.

McCormick, J., & Barnett, K. (2011). Lecturers' attributions for stress and their Relationships with burnout. *International Journal of Educational Management*, *25*(3), 278-293.

Meyer, J. P., Stanley, D. J., Herscovitch, L., & Topolnytsky, L. (2002). Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment to the Organization: A Meta-analysis of Antecedents, Correlates, and Consequences. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *61*(1), 20-52.

Netemeyer, R. G., Boles, J. S., & McMurrian, R. (1996). Development and validation of work–family conflict and family–work conflict scales. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *81*(4), 400-410.

Qiu, J. (2010). Publish or perish in China. *Nature*, *463*(7278), 142.

Rajendran, N., Watt, H., & Richardson, P. (2020). Teacher burnout and turnover intent. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, *47*(7). 1-24.

Rathi, S., & Kumar, P. (2023). A Study of the Mediating Effect of Work Stress on Work-life Conflict and Turnover Intention in the Private Higher Education Sector in India. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, *15*(2). 1-21.

Saloviita, T., & Pakarinen, E. (2021). Teacher burnout explained: Teacher-, student-, and organisation-level variables. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *97*, 103-121.

Salvagioni, D., Melanda, F., Mesas, A., González, A., Gabani, F., & Andrade, S. (2017). Physical, psychological and occupational consequences of job burnout: A systematic review of prospective studies. *Plos One*, *12*, e0185781. 1-18

Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., & Hair, J. F. (2021). Partial least squares structural equation modeling. In *Handbook of market research*. Springer; pp. 587-632.

Schaufeli, W. B., Bakker, A. B., Hoogduin, K., Schaap, C., & Kladler, A. (2001). On the clinical validity of the maslach burnout inventory and the burnout measure. *Psychology & Health*, *16*(5), 565-582.

Tian, M., & Lu, G. (2017). What price the building of world-class universities? Academic pressure faced by young lecturers at a research-centered University in China. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *22*(8), 957-974.

Tian, M., Su, Y., & Ru, X. (2016). Perish or Publish in China: Pressures on Young Chinese Scholars to Publish in Internationally Indexed Journals. *Publications*, *4*(2), 9-17.

Tytherleigh, M. Y., Webb, C., Cooper, C. L., & Ricketts, C. (2005). Occupational stress in UK higher education institutions: a comparative study of all staff categories. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *24*(1), 41-61.

Virtanen, P., & Parpala, A. (2023). The role of teaching processes in turnover intentions, risk of burnout, and stress during COVID-19: a case study among Finnish University teacher educators. *Frontiers in Education*, *8*. 1-9.

Wang, S., & Jones, G. A. (2021). Competing institutional logics of academic personnel system reforms in leading Chinese Universities. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *43*(1), 49-66.

Wang, T., Yu, L., Wang, W., & Dai, K. (2023). Employees in change: An exploration of academics' perceived employee-organisation relationship in the reform of the tenure-track system in China. *Studies in Higher Education*. 2066-2079.

Wang, X. (2020). Capital, habitus, and education in contemporary China: Understanding motivations of middle-class families in pursuing studying abroad in the United States. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *52*(12), 1314-1328.

Wang, X., & Wang, W. L. (2024). The tenure track employment system in colleges and universities in China: a scoping review of the Chinese literature. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *14*. 1-11.

Watts, J., & Robertson, N. (2011). Burnout in university teaching staff: a systematic literature review. *Educational Research*, *53*(1), 33-50.

Wei, C., & Ye, J.-H. (2022). The Impacts of Work-Life Balance on the Emotional Exhaustion and Well-Being of College Lecturers in China. *Healthcare*, *10*(11), 1-16.

Weiss, H. M. (2002). Deconstructing job satisfaction: Separating evaluations, beliefs and affective experiences. *Human Resource Management Review*, *12*(2), 173-194.

Yang, R., Vidovich, L., & Currie, J. (2007). "Dancing in a cage": Changing autonomy in Chinese higher education. *Higher Education*, *54*, 575-592.

Yang, X., Cai, X. L., & Li, T. S. (2024). Does the tenure track influence academic research? An empirical study of faculty members in China. *Studies in Higher Education*, *49*(3), 476-492.

Yin, H., & Ke, Z. (2017). Students' course experience and engagement: an attempt to bridge two lines of research on the quality of undergraduate education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *42*(7), 1145-1158.

Zhang, J., Cao, C., Shen, S., & Qian, M. (2019). Examining Effects of Self-Efficacy on Research Motivation Among Chinese University Lecturers: Moderation of Leader Support and Mediation of Goal Orientations. *Jounral of Psychology, 153*(4), 414-435.

Zhang, Q., Li, X., & Gamble, J. H. (2022). Teacher burnout and turnover intention in higher education: The mediating role of job satisfaction and the moderating role of proactive personality. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*. 1-18.

Zhong, J., You, J., Gan, Y., Zhang, Y., Lu, C.-q., & Wang, H. (2009). Job Stress, Burnout, Depression Symptoms, and Physical Health among Chinese University Lecturers. *Psychological reports*, *105*(3), 1248-1254.

The content, as well as the use of language in the article, is the responsibility of the author.