

A Systematic Review of Chinese Vocational Colleges Teacher Performance Determinants

Kajian Sistematis Terhadap Penentu Prestasi Guru Kolej Vokasional China

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews the literature on teacher job performance from 1990 to 2025. Following the PRISMA framework, a total of 92 peer-reviewed papers from the Scopus database were included. Unlike previous studies that simply listed isolated factors, this review reveals how these factors interact rather than operate independently. The findings demonstrate an integrated network with clear interaction pathways. Organizational-level factors including transformational leadership, organizational commitment and support directly determine job performance, while individual-level resources including work engagement, emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy form a sequential chain leading directly to job performance. Job satisfaction serves as a mediating variable that transmits influences across levels, and occupational stress and burnout moderate these pathways. Teachers' job performance is not determined by any single dimension but results from the dynamic interaction among individual characteristics, organizational environment, and policy support. These influencing factors show statistically significant differences across different regions and cultural contexts, school systems, and urban-rural environments. This study goes beyond a simple enumeration of eight independent factors and proposes a multilevel, path-based analytical framework, clarifying the interaction mechanisms among the influencing factors. Based on these findings, the article offers specific recommendations to school administrators and educational policymakers, focusing on teacher well-being and organizational mechanisms to improve teaching quality in China's vocational education system.

Keywords: Job Performance; Job Satisfaction; Organizational Support; Work Engagement; Emotional Intelligence

INTRODUCTION

Job performance, as a core variable in organizational behavior research, not only affects workforce stability and employees' intention to stay but also determines the effectiveness and quality of organizational outputs. This pattern is particularly evident in educational organizations. Teachers' job performance is a key predictor of teaching quality, is related to students' academic achievement, and influences the sustainable development of the school. For China's vocational education system, this



impact is crucial. As a national strategic priority, vocational education is regarded as an important support for cultivating highly skilled talent and promoting industrial upgrading, and it must adapt to China's continuously evolving economic needs. Despite its recognized importance, research on the job performance of vocational education teachers is still in its early stages, fragmented, lacking systematic integration, and has not yet formed a mature academic discourse system.

There is a noticeable lack of relevance in existing research, which has affected the overall impact of this field. Although a large body of literature has explored the job performance of university teachers, most of these studies are based on Western academic contexts, and systematic research targeting teachers in Chinese vocational colleges remains relatively scarce. Existing studies are scattered in terms of geographic distribution and thematic coverage, and a comprehensive analytical framework with overall and multilevel characteristics has yet to be formed. Most findings focus on examining a single influencing factor, such as job burnout, job satisfaction, professional identity, or job stress. However, in the unique sociocultural context of the Chinese educational environment, the complex interactions among these factors have often not been fully explored.

Existing research shows significant methodological inconsistencies which hinder the systematic accumulation of knowledge. A large number of studies rely on local, nonrepresentative samples, and their limited sample sizes may introduce systematic biases, weakening statistical power. There is high heterogeneity and a lack of standardization in the measurement tools used for core constructs such as job satisfaction and professional identity. These methodological limitations collectively restrict the internal validity of research findings and reduce the comparability across studies as well as the external validity of the conclusions. The current teaching environment is undergoing rapid changes, with factors such as the widespread adoption of blended learning models, deep integration of digital teaching tools, and the reshaping of work norms in the post-pandemic era affecting teachers' job performance (Madrid et al., 2024). For vocational education teachers, there is still a lack of systematic exploration on how these factors impact their job performance. This research gap limits the understanding of vocational education teachers' job performance and also exposes the lag in existing literature.

Based on the shortcomings revealed by existing research, this paper argues that it is necessary to conduct a systematic and rigorous integrative review of the relevant literature. Current studies show obvious fragmentation and contradictions, and there is an urgent need for a careful synthesis to organize, reconcile, and critically evaluate the existing evidence in order to build a more consistent and reliable body of knowledge. A well-conducted systematic review can play a key role in the following aspects: identifying the core factors influencing teacher job performance that remain stable across different research methods, clarifying the mechanisms and contextual differences of these factors across various types of institutions, such as public and private schools, and regional contexts, such as eastern versus central and western regions, and assessing the methodological strengths and limitations of existing studies. This analytical process not only helps to deepen theoretical understanding of the mechanisms underlying teacher job performance but also provides solid evidence to support institutional design and policy practice.

This study reviews empirical research on the job performance of vocational education teachers from 1990 to 2025, addressing the aforementioned research gaps. Unlike previous fragmented and partial research perspectives, this paper aims to systematically advance knowledge accumulation in this field. The specific objectives include, identifying, organizing, and integrating key factors affecting job performance and their interaction mechanisms at multiple levels, including individual, organizational, and situational levels, analyzing the pathways and moderating effects of these factors across different types of institutions, and regional development contexts, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of existing research in terms of methodological rigor, design logic, and reporting standards to provide a methodological reference for future studies, and constructing a multidimensional integrated theoretical framework that not only presents the existing knowledge structure but also provides a theoretical basis for subsequent empirical research. This study aims to provide evidence-based references for institutional management practices and educational policymaking, thereby supporting teacher professional development, improving organizational effectiveness, and promoting the high quality and sustainable development of China's vocational education system.

METHODOLOGY

Analysis Techniques

This study follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses framework to ensure the transparency and completeness of the review process. Following the structured procedures established by the PRISMA 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021), literature was identified, screened, and included. This framework is widely recognized in the social sciences, as it enhances methodological rigor by clearly documenting each stage of the review and provides a basis for the reproducibility of the research process (Mengiste et al., 2023; Nezameslami et al., 2025; Ogunmakinde et al., 2024). It also helps identify current limitations in research methodology and reporting, providing guidance for improving future study designs.

This study adheres to the four stages of the PRISMA framework, literature identification, preliminary screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion. To ensure the traceability and systematic nature of the review process and to control selection bias, operations at each stage are documented in detail, and all exclusion decisions are accompanied by clear reasons, enhancing methodological rigor. The literature screening process is visually presented through the PRISMA flow diagram (Oluleye et al., 2022), clarifying the decision pathways for including and excluding studies. This systematic approach provides a foundation for evidence extraction and synthesis. By applying the PRISMA reporting checklist, standardized reporting is achieved in key aspects such as search strategy documentation, inclusion criteria setting, and data extraction procedures, enhancing the reproducibility of the research process and the credibility of the results.

Resources And Search Strategy

The Scopus database was used as a core source for literature retrieval because of its strong coverage of literature in the fields of social sciences, education, and management. Scopus includes a wealth of international and regional journals, making it highly suitable for English language publications (Malanski et al., 2021). The search strategy utilized relevant keywords combined with Boolean operators. The search string used was: ("job performance" OR "work performance") AND ("vocational college" OR "vocational education") AND ("China" OR "Chinese"). The publication time frame was limited to articles from January 1990 to December 2025 in order to cover the latest trends and contemporary knowledge. To increase comprehensiveness, the reference lists of related literature were also screened, and full texts of vocational education policy literature published in Chinese journals, as well as teacher survey studies, were closely read. The inclusion criteria remained focused on empirical research results published in peer-reviewed journals. A total of 906 articles were retained. After removing duplicates and irrelevant titles, 378 articles proceeded to the abstract screening stage. Following full-text assessment of 240 articles, 92 studies met all inclusion criteria and formed the empirical basis for this systematic review.

Data Collection And Eligibility Criteria

The data collection process followed strict and previously established protocols to ensure consistency and relevance. Included studies had to meet the following criteria: the research topic primarily or secondarily involved job performance, the studies employed empirical research methods with transparent data reporting, and they were published in peer-reviewed Scopus journals. The research designs included both qualitative and quantitative types. Exclusion criteria encompassed studies related to general higher education faculty and administrative staff. Particular attention was given to including studies focused on post-pandemic adaptation (Madrid et al., 2024), online and digital teaching methods, and hybrid work models, as these reflect recent changes in the teaching work environment. Titles and abstracts were first screened to generate a preliminary list, followed by a review of the full text of the remaining studies according to the PRISMA guidelines. This process was used to determine the relevance and methodological suitability of the included studies.

This study extracted 92 articles that met the inclusion criteria from the Scopus database, forming the core dataset for analysis. To facilitate a comprehensive comparison and synthesis of the studies, these articles were coded based on research design, sample characteristics, school type, and regional context, as detailed below in Figure 1.

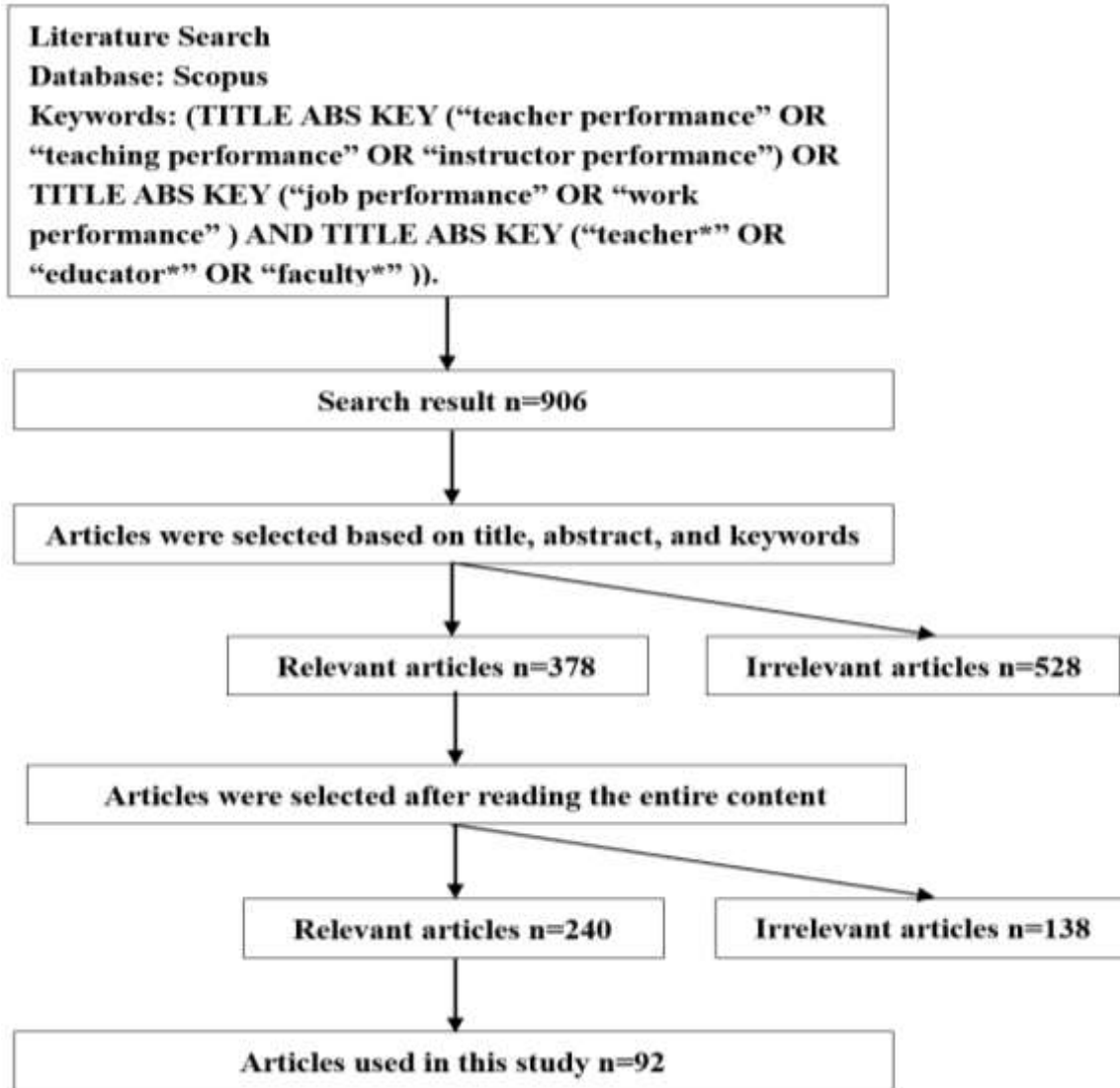


Figure 1. Technical Roadmap of Systematic Review

Data Items

This review extracted data from 92 Scopus publications included in the study. Information extraction covered the following dimensions: author and year of publication, distinguishing between quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods, recording sample size and key demographic characteristics, identifying the theoretical frameworks used in the studies, and summarizing the main conclusions regarding factors affecting job performance. Based on predefined key variables, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and support, occupational stress, transformational leadership, work engagement, occupational burnout, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence, each study was recoded. Reported statistical effect sizes, correlation coefficients, and theme frequencies were recorded to lay the foundation for subsequent descriptive and comparative analyses. After data aggregation, the information was organized in a comparison matrix, effectively supporting cross-study synthesis, enhancing the consistency of research findings, and helping to identify generalizable patterns of influence. Throughout this paper, references marked as 2025 correspond to studies that were published online as early access or in press versions in the Scopus database at the time of writing.

RESULTS

It should be noted that while the primary focus of this review is on Chinese vocational education teachers, some studies from external contexts are included to provide comparative insights. These external studies are explicitly labeled as external context in the text and serve as supplementary references rather than direct evidence for the Chinese vocational education setting. Figure 2 shows the integrated conceptual framework of factors influencing the job performance of vocational education teachers, organized into three levels and linked through specific pathways.

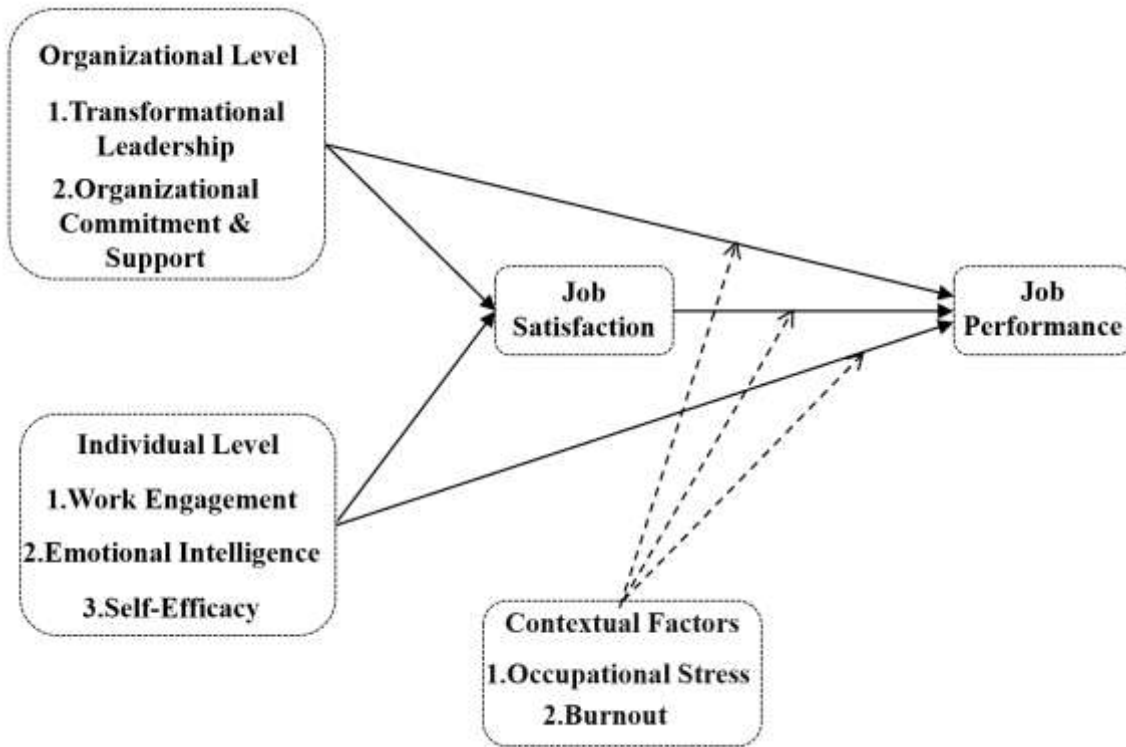


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Factors Affecting Job Performance

From Organizational Level to Job Performance

The first pathway identifies how organizational-level factors, specifically transformational leadership and organizational commitment, directly determine teacher job performance. Among the teacher community in China, transformational leadership is strongly positively correlated with teacher job performance, with dimensions such as intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational communication independently predicting teacher job satisfaction (Zhao et al., 2025). Transformational leadership can enhance teacher job performance by strengthening teachers’ sense of psychological contract fulfillment (Kou et al., 2024). In external higher education contexts (Vietnam and Malaysia), transformational leadership style has also been shown to directly improve teachers’ job satisfaction and job performance (Jyoti & Bhau, 2015; Maheshwari, 2022). Even in resource-limited private university environments, transformational leadership maintains a medium or above level of positive impact on teacher job performance (Yu & Jang, 2024). In special contexts such as remote teaching, transformational leadership can indirectly improve task performance and teaching quality by enhancing teachers’ positive emotional states (Šimunović et al., 2024).

Organizational culture plays a key mediating role between transformational leadership and university teacher job performance, with a positive school culture reinforcing the effect of leadership behavior on performance improvement (Chunhui et al., 2024). Transformational leadership enhances teachers’ identification with and trust in leaders by establishing high-quality leader member exchange relationships, thereby improving their job performance (Jyoti & Bhau, 2015). In an external context (India), transformational leadership has also been found to indirectly promote performance by granting

teachers work autonomy and building trust in principals (Khan, 2023). In the context of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, transformational leadership and teachers' digital literacy together constitute key predictors of their job performance (Madrid et al., 2024).

The impact of transformational leadership varies among different teacher groups. For example, in Chinese private universities, organizational vision, intellectual stimulation, and individual recognition significantly drive teacher job performance, whereas the roles of supportive leadership and moral modeling remain to be further verified (Yu & Jang, 2024).

Among Chinese university teachers, organizational commitment explains up to 57% of job performance, demonstrating a strong predictive effect (Zhao & Hsin, 2024). Teachers' organizational commitment, along with factors such as psychological empowerment and sense of professional achievement, jointly affects their job performance (Shi & Zheng, 2025; Yao et al., 2024). Instructional leadership indirectly promotes teacher performance by enhancing teachers' organizational commitment (Berhanu, 2023b). Supportive leadership not only directly improves teacher performance but also plays a moderating role by enhancing teachers' organizational commitment (Shi & Zheng, 2025).

Organizational support also has multiple pathways of influence. It not only directly enhances teacher performance but also exerts an indirect effect by improving teachers' job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Chinomona & Moloi, 2014; Chinomona & Sandada, 2014). In an external developing country context (South Africa), organizational support also significantly positively affects teachers' occupational commitment, job satisfaction, and performance (Chinomona & Moloi, 2014). The moderating role of organizational support in the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher job performance has also been confirmed, especially when the level of job redesign among teachers is low, making the effect of organizational support more pronounced (du Toit et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, teachers' sense of professional achievement influences performance through the mediating role of organizational commitment, a pathway positively moderated by supportive leadership (Shi & Zheng, 2025). The structure of organizational commitment and its impact on job performance vary under different cultural contexts and educational systems. In the Chinese context, affective commitment has a chained mediating effect between organizational silence and performance (Yao et al., 2024), whereas in cross-cultural comparisons, the predictive pathway of organizational commitment on performance shows a certain degree of stability (Yaakob et al., 2025).

Thus, transformational leadership and organizational commitment directly determine job performance, which confirms that organizational-level factors primarily influence job performance.

From Individual Level to Job Performance

At the individual level, work engagement, emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy directly determine job performance as a sequential chain of psychological resources.

The higher the level of teachers' work engagement, the better their job performance tends to be. Highly engaged teachers have longer-lasting focus, stronger professional vitality, and are more willing to make proactive contributions, all of which are directly reflected in the completion of teaching tasks, the improvement of teaching quality, and the enhancement of teaching adaptability (Bhat et al., 2024). Even in non-traditional contexts such as remote teaching, high engagement is still associated with good task performance (Korsakienė et al., 2024).

Further, work engagement serves as a key mediator between individual factors, organizational environment, and job performance. For example, teachers' positive teaching emotions, psychological capital, sense of work meaningfulness, and personal strengths usually first enhance work engagement, which then indirectly improves performance (Dilekçi et al., 2025). Similarly, organizational-level factors such as organizational support, transformational leadership, and optimized work design also need to enhance teachers' work engagement in order to be effectively translated into performance outcomes (Hong & Mohamed Zainal, 2024).

The relationship between work engagement and job performance is not fixed and can be moderated by multiple factors. Remote work arrangements can strengthen the positive effect of organizational support on work engagement, thus indirectly affecting job performance (Korsakienė et al., 2024). Teachers' information and communication technology literacy partially mediates between work engagement and job performance, meaning that digital literacy has become an essential condition for contemporary teachers to convert professional engagement into actual performance (Bhat et al., 2024). Moreover, teaching experience, school type, and cultural background may also play a role in between. These findings, on the one hand, support the applicability of the Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) among teachers, and on the other hand, expand its explanatory scope. Work engagement not only helps to leverage the positive impact of work resources on job performance but also can buffer the negative effects of work stress to some extent (Korsakienė et al., 2024). From the perspective of educational management, improving teachers' work engagement requires a systematic approach focusing on work meaningfulness construction, strength utilization, emotional support, and digital literacy development (Ismaili et al., 2024).

Work engagement can further drive emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence itself also has a positive predictive effect on teachers' job performance. Teachers with high emotional intelligence generally perform better in classroom management, teaching adaptability, and student support (Bee Yoke & Aisyah Panatik, 2015). Whether it is self-emotional awareness, understanding others' emotions, or the use and regulation of emotions, these different dimensions of emotional intelligence are all associated with performance (Bee Yoke & Aisyah Panatik, 2015). Especially in teaching, a profession that requires frequent interpersonal interactions, the predictive role of trait emotional intelligence is particularly evident (Hasan et al., 2023). Teachers with high emotional intelligence are more likely to exhibit charismatic leadership behaviors, which not only helps improve their own performance but also positively affects the overall teaching quality of the school (Tahir et al., 2025). They are also more inclined to adopt proactive coping strategies and positively adapt to job demands, thereby indirectly improving work efficiency (Amirian et al., 2023).

Emotional intelligence not only directly influences job performance but also acts indirectly through multiple mediating pathways. Teachers with high emotional intelligence generally have higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and lower levels of emotional exhaustion, all of which help them maintain good performance in teaching (Annor et al., 2023). During emotional labor, emotional intelligence can help teachers reduce emotional exhaustion caused by surface acting, thereby maintaining positive behaviors such as organizational citizenship (Annor et al., 2023). Social support and team interaction also play a mediating role, teachers with high emotional intelligence are more likely to build high-quality collaborative relationships and social support networks, which in turn enhances performance (Lu & Chen, 2024; Wang et al., 2024). In high emotion demand environments like special education, social support and work engagement even form a chain mediating effect between emotional intelligence and performance (Wang et al., 2024).

The impact of emotional intelligence on performance is also moderated by individual and situational factors. For teachers with longer teaching experience, the promotion of emotional intelligence on the quality of team interaction may be weakened, indicating that the mechanism of action of emotional intelligence may be different at different career stages (Lu & Chen, 2024). Gender and cultural background may also play a moderating role in this (Amirian et al., 2023; Ghanieah et al., 2018). The mechanism by which emotional intelligence affects performance among teachers at different educational stages and professional fields is also different, and it must be analyzed in conjunction with the specific teaching environment (Ismaili et al., 2024). Theoretically, the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance can be explained by resource conservation theory or job requirements-resource model. As a psychological resource, emotional intelligence not only directly promotes performance, but also mitigates the negative effects of emotional labor and other work demands by enhancing other resources such as social support and work engagement (Wang et al., 2024).

Self-efficacy is a psychological resource at the individual level and a part of the impact on performance. Teachers with high self-efficacy are usually more persistent in tasks, achieve higher teaching goals, and are more proactive in classroom management (Afshar & Moradifar, 2021). In cross-cultural teaching settings, self-efficacy is particularly closely related to teachers' adaptability in multicultural classrooms and their effectiveness in supporting student learning (Peterson & Jensen, 2025). Self-efficacy has a stable positive predictive effect on both task performance and adaptive performance (Duyar & Normore, 2012).

Self-efficacy also often acts as an intermediary between organizational environmental factors and job performance. School reward systems can indirectly enhance teachers' performance by improving their self-efficacy (Ocak et al., 2024). Learning-oriented organizational culture improves performance by increasing self-efficacy and work engagement (Song et al., 2018). Self-efficacy also often affects performance along with factors such as reflective teaching and professional development attitudes. Among Iranian English teachers, self-efficacy, reflective teaching, and professional development attitudes all positively predicted job performance, with self-efficacy having the strongest predictive power (Soodmand Afshar & Yar, 2019). Self-efficacy also interacts with organizational psychological variables such as organizational identity and collective effectiveness to jointly improve teachers' performance and professional pursuit at work (Duyar & Normore, 2012).

In a teaching environment characterized by cultural and linguistic diversity, the role of self-efficacy is particularly prominent. Exposure to diverse student groups can instead enhance teachers' self-efficacy in cross-cultural teaching, thereby improving performance and reducing occupational burnout (Peterson & Jensen, 2025).

The starting point of this chain is work engagement, followed by emotional intelligence, then self-efficacy, finally culminating in job performance. This sequence indicates that individual psychological resources accumulate and reinforce each other layer by layer, with each step based on the previous one, ultimately gradually boosting performance.

The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction serves as a key mediating variable through which both organizational-level and individual-level factors influence job performance. Across external Asian educational contexts, a moderate to high positive correlation has also been observed between teachers' job satisfaction and job performance (Faremi & Jita, 2019; Maheshwari, 2022; Rezaee et al., 2018), providing comparative reference points. This relationship has also been validated among teacher populations in China (the primary focus of this review), as well as in external contexts such as the United Arab Emirates and Italy (Crisci et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2024; Salameh & Benkohila, 2024).

Job satisfaction receives input from both organizational-level factors, including transformational leadership, organizational commitment, organizational support, and individual-level factors. It then transmits these influences to work engagement and ultimately affects job performance. In external contexts, transformational leadership behavior has also been shown to improve teachers' performance by enhancing their job satisfaction (Maheshwari, 2022; Yu et al., 2025). School management practices, organizational support, and professional development policies also indirectly boost teachers' performance by increasing job satisfaction (Alam, 2022; Muawanah et al., 2020). Emotional intelligence positively predicts teacher performance through the partial mediating role of job satisfaction (Li et al., 2018). Factors such as teacher professional development and digital literacy similarly influence performance through the mediating role of job satisfaction (Berhanu, 2023a; Lyu & Luo, 2024).

Subjective well-being moderates the relationship between job satisfaction and performance. When well-being is at a low to moderate level, the positive effect of job satisfaction on performance becomes more significant (Kumar, 2022). Meanwhile, psychological empowerment and job satisfaction form a chain mediating pathway between digital literacy and performance, highlighting the multiple interactive effects of psychological mechanisms (Lyu & Luo, 2024).

Teacher collaboration exhibits differentiated moderating effects across levels. At the individual teacher level, high levels of collaboration enhance the predictive effect of job satisfaction on performance; however, at the school level, collaboration shows a negative moderating effect (Liu et al., 2024). In an external centralized education system such as Turkey, collective teacher culture also plays a key mediating role between job satisfaction and performance, while teacher autonomy indirectly affects performance through collective culture (Battal & Demirkasimoğlu, 2025). Additionally, the lower the level of organizational trust, the stronger the mediating role of job satisfaction between emotional intelligence and performance (Li et al., 2018).

Moderating Effects of Contextual Factors

The above paths are not universally applicable but are moderated by two contextual factors: occupational stress and burnout. Lu and Jian (2024) pointed out that emotional factors such as anxiety and anger play a mediating role between stress and performance, stress affects teachers' psychological state through negative emotions, thereby reducing their job satisfaction. In an external context (the UAE), Salameh and Benkohila (2024) found that teachers' job satisfaction directly affects performance, while stress is an important antecedent influencing satisfaction. Battal and Demirkasimoğlu (2025) indicated that in a centralized education system, limited teacher autonomy exacerbates the negative impact of occupational stress on performance. Yu et al. (2025) found that distributed leadership can enhance teachers' sense of participation and resource support, thereby alleviating stress and indirectly improving performance. Organizational support can improve teachers' job satisfaction and buffer the negative effects of stress on performance. Li et al. (2018) proposed that teachers with high emotional intelligence are better able to manage stress, maintain higher job satisfaction, and thus sustain good job performance. Battal and Demirkasimoğlu (2025) also emphasized that under conditions of limited autonomy, a collective teacher culture can mitigate individual stress through team support, indirectly improving performance.

Occupational burnout is not an independent predictor, but a negative moderating variable that weakens the positive effect of individual-level resources on job performance. Teachers with high levels of burnout often reduce their teaching engagement, experience a decline in classroom management efficiency, and show insufficient willingness for teaching innovation (Jamal et al., 1998). In the context of an unstable professional environment and increasing work pressure, the erosive effect of burnout on job performance becomes more evident. A study on university teachers found that occupational burnout damages teachers' job performance, thereby affecting education quality and their professional contributions (Pépin, 2025). In an external context (Peru), occupational burnout is also a negative predictor of teachers' job performance (Chumpitazi Torres & Sagástegui Cruz, 2023).

Teachers who receive sufficient social support and have strong coping abilities often exhibit lower levels of burnout and experience less negative impact on performance (Greenglass, 2007). When teachers feel that their work conflicts with their personal values, the risk of occupational burnout significantly increases, which may severely impair job performance (Pépin, 2025). If teachers feel that their work is meaningful, it can effectively alleviate burnout and play a protective role for performance. Organizational factors such as unstable employment relationships, excessive performance pressure, and lack of support can also exacerbate burnout experiences and negatively affect performance (Chumpitazi Torres & Sagástegui Cruz, 2023). Part-time work or multiple occupational roles may indirectly moderate the relationship between burnout and performance by increasing work pressure and role conflict (Jamal et al., 1998).

Occupational stress can weaken positive pathways, while organizational support and emotional intelligence can buffer this negative effect. Occupational burnout negatively regulates the positive effects of work engagement, emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy on job performance. This explains why some teachers, who originally had relatively high individual resources, still perform poorly, as these resources have been depleted by burnout.

In summary, the 92 studies included in this review support an integrated framework of interconnected pathways. The findings demonstrate an integrated network with clear interaction pathways. Organizational-level factors including transformational leadership, organizational commitment and

support directly determine job performance, while individual-level resources including work engagement, emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy form a sequential chain leading directly to job performance. Job satisfaction serves as a mediating variable that transmits influences across levels, and occupational stress and burnout moderate these pathways. These pathways do not operate in isolation. The organizational-level pathway provides organizational conditions that influence job satisfaction, which in turn further activates the individual psychological resource pathway. Meanwhile, occupational burnout and job stress function as situational factors that moderate all pathways. Figure 2 visually illustrates the pathways and their interconnections.

DISCUSSION

Integrated Evaluation of Key Factors

The following content summarizes the findings from existing research on the main factors affecting the job performance of vocational college teachers. Teacher job performance is the result of dynamic interactions between internal and external factors. Organizational environmental factors provide fundamental support, and research generally emphasizes that organizational commitment and support play an important role. These organizational conditions positively influence job performance by enhancing teachers' professional identity and job satisfaction (Chinomona & Moloji, 2014; Chinomona & Sandada, 2014; Shi & Zheng, 2025; Zhao & Hsin, 2024).

Transformational leadership and occupational stress occupy a central position in research on teacher job performance, with both often viewed as key dimensions influencing job performance (Jyoti & Bhau, 2015; Maheshwari, 2022; Yu & Jiang, 2024; Zhao et al., 2025). This review suggests that insufficient compensation and benefits are a major reason for declining teacher job satisfaction, especially in regions with relatively lagging economic development or heavy living burdens, where this problem is more pronounced. At the same time, career development opportunities, as an important source of motivation, have a significant impact on teachers' professional engagement and work drive (Alam, 2022; Berhanu, 2023a). Their effectiveness often depends on whether schools have established clear promotion pathways, fair reward mechanisms, and sustainable growth support systems. If teachers face prolonged limitations in development opportunities and a lack of promotion prospects, they are prone to professional stagnation and a decline in occupational identity, which can further lead to emotional detachment and job burnout (Jamal et al., 1998; Pépin, 2025).

There are differences in the mechanisms by which work engagement, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence affect job performance. Work engagement directly impacts job performance by enhancing teachers' focus and persistence in tasks (Bhat et al., 2024). Self-efficacy indirectly promotes work outcomes by boosting teachers' confidence and ability to act when facing challenges (Afshar & Moradifar, 2021; Duyar & Normore, 2012; Ocak et al., 2024). Emotional intelligence helps teachers maintain adaptability in interpersonal interactions and stressful situations, thereby providing crucial emotional and social support for job performance (Bee Yoke & Aisyah Panatik, 2015; Hasan et al., 2023; Lu & Chen, 2024). These three factors constitute an intrinsic psychological system that influences teachers' job performance, as explained by the job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) and conservation of resources theory (Wang et al., 2024).

Comparison with Prior Reviews and Unexpected Findings

Unlike previous reviews that tended to list isolated predictors of teacher performance (e.g., Rezaee et al., 2018; Crisci et al., 2019), this study advances the literature by integrating these factors into a pathway-based framework. Prior reviews often reported correlations without specifying how factors relate to one another. For example, earlier meta-analyses confirmed that transformational leadership correlates with teacher performance, but they did not explain the sequential mechanism through which this effect operates (Jyoti & Bhau, 2015; Maheshwari, 2022). This review fills that gap by demonstrating that transformational leadership and organizational commitment influence performance indirectly through job satisfaction (Zhao & Hsin, 2024; Shi & Zheng, 2025). Moreover, while existing reviews have acknowledged the importance of work engagement and self-efficacy (Bhat et al., 2024; Song et al.,

2018), they rarely treated them as a developmental sequence. This review proposes that work engagement enables emotional intelligence (Dilekçi et al., 2025), which in turn builds self-efficacy (Soodmand Afshar & Yar, 2019; Afshar & Moradifar, 2021).

Several findings diverge from what previous literature might predict. First, while organizational support is widely recognized as a direct predictor of performance (Chinomona & Molo, 2014; Chinomona & Sandada, 2014), this review found that its effect is largely mediated by job satisfaction (Alam, 2022). Second, although burnout is often studied as an outcome variable (Jamal et al., 1998; Chumpitazi Torres & Sagástegui Cruz, 2023), this review reveals that burnout functions primarily as a moderator that weakens the positive effects of individual-level resources (Kalteh et al., 2023; Greenglass, 2007). Third, the negative moderating effect of teacher collaboration at the school level was unexpected (Liu et al., 2024). While collaboration at the teacher level strengthens the job satisfaction and performance link, at the school level it shows the opposite effect, suggesting that excessive institutionalized collaboration may impose additional demands on teachers (Battal & Demirkasimoğlu, 2025).

Applicability and Boundary Conditions

The findings of this review are not universally applicable but are contingent on specific contextual conditions. The proposed pathways are likely to hold most strongly in centralized education systems similar to China's, where organizational policies and leadership behaviors play a dominant role (Berhanu, 2023b; Yu & Jang, 2024). In more decentralized systems, the mediating role of job satisfaction might be weaker, and individual autonomy could play a larger direct role (Khan, 2023; Šimunović et al., 2024). Additionally, the framework is primarily based on studies conducted in Asian and developing country contexts, which may limit its generalizability to developed countries (Yaakob et al., 2025; Zhao et al., 2025). The moderating effects of school type and urban-rural disparities further suggest that the pathways may operate differently across public versus private institutions and resource-rich versus resource-poor settings (Faremi & Jita, 2019; Ocaik et al., 2024).

Why Chinese Vocational College Teachers Are A Unique Population

Chinese vocational education teachers constitute a distinctive research population for several reasons. First, they face dual pressures from both academic expectations and industry skill requirements, creating a unique combination of job demands (Korsakienė et al., 2024; Madrid et al., 2024). Second, the Chinese vocational education system is undergoing rapid transformation as a national strategic priority, meaning policy changes and accountability reforms are occurring simultaneously. Third, cultural factors such as high power distance and collectivism shape how organizational commitment operates in the Chinese context (Yao et al., 2024; Chunhui et al., 2024). The strong predictive effect of organizational commitment on performance found in this review (up to 57%) may reflect the cultural emphasis on loyalty and group harmony (Zhao & Hsin, 2024), which might be less pronounced in individualistic cultures (Yaakob et al., 2025). Fourth, the urban-rural divide creates stark disparities in resources and working conditions for vocational college teachers (Peterson & Jensen, 2025; Lu & Jian, 2024). These unique characteristics justify treating Chinese vocational college teachers as a distinct population requiring context-specific research and interventions.

Contributions to Theory

Based on an analysis of the mechanisms influencing the job performance of vocational college teachers, expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) and the job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) can be introduced as analytical frameworks. Expectancy theory suggests that an individual's work motivation is closely related to their expectations regarding the relationship between effort, performance, and reward. In the context of vocational colleges, teachers' work engagement is often directly related to the clarity of the performance evaluation system and the alignment of reward mechanisms (Ocaik et al., 2024; Ismaili et al., 2024).

At the same time, the job demands-resources model categorizes occupational stress and role overload as job demands, while organizational support and leadership recognition are classified as job resources

(Korsakienė et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). When available resources effectively meet work demands, job performance can be maintained or enhanced. Inadequate resources can lead to burnout and performance decline (du Toit et al., 2022; Kalteh et al., 2023). Expectancy theory and the job demands-resources model are complementary in explaining teacher job performance. The former focuses on individual cognition and motivational processes, while the latter emphasizes environmental structure and resource matching (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Vroom, 1964).

CONCLUSION

Overview of Main Conclusions

This systematic review goes beyond the approach of listing factors in isolation and clarifies how the eight included factors work together to influence the job performance of vocational college teachers. The review reveals an integrated framework composed of interrelated pathways, rather than eight independent predictors. The impact of transformational leadership on job performance is clarified, representing a pathway originating at the organizational level. Focusing on the individual level, a sequential chain emerges: work engagement first drives improvements in emotional intelligence, which in turn enhances self-efficacy, ultimately promoting job performance. Moreover, job satisfaction plays a cross-level mediating role, linking organizational-level pathways with individual-level pathways, thereby forming a channel that starts from the organization and indirectly reaches performance. These pathways do not operate independently of each other. The organizational-level pathway provides organizational conditions for job satisfaction, which in turn activates the pathway of individual psychological resources. At the same time, occupational burnout and work stress, as situational variables, play a moderating role in all effects.

Theoretical Implications

The main theoretical contribution of this review lies in replacing a flat list of eight factors with a path-based integrative framework, which advances existing understanding in three ways. It clarifies the mediating mechanisms rather than just the correlations. Previous studies often only reported correlations between transformational leadership and performance, while this review shows that this correlation operates through organizational commitment and Transformational Leadership, and that interventions targeting leadership alone without involving these mediating variables are unlikely to succeed. At the same time, it identifies sequential chains rather than independent effects. Work engagement, emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy do not independently predict job performance, but rather form a development sequence: work engagement activates emotional intelligence, emotional intelligence then enhances self-efficacy, ultimately leading to improved performance. Additionally, it distinguishes between direct effects and moderating effects. Occupational stress and burnout are often treated as direct predictive variables, but this review shows that burnout mainly serves a moderating role, weakening positive pathways, while job stress is a precursor that triggers burnout. This distinction has important implications for intervention design.

Practical Implications

For school administrators, this framework indicates that improving teacher performance depends on systematic interventions, rather than implementing piecemeal or isolated measures. If you focus only on individual factors, for example only thinking about reducing teacher stress without simultaneously addressing burnout and without providing organizational support or other buffer resources, the effects are often limited. Administrators can consider several actions. They can engage more in transformational leadership behaviors that truly enhance organizational commitment and job satisfaction. When designing professional development programs, they can intentionally follow the sequence of cultivating work engagement, emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy in teachers. They can increase programs aimed at preventing burnout to avoid exhausting teachers' individual resources. They can also adjust interventions according to specific circumstances, such as the type of school and regional conditions,

rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach. For education policymakers, this framework reminds them that organizational-level reforms, such as modifying the performance evaluation system or opening promotion channels, can only ultimately translate into improved performance if they genuinely enhance teachers' job satisfaction and work engagement. Therefore, policy design must consider the entire mediation chain and cannot assume that changing a single policy will directly produce results.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This review has certain limitations. The literature sources are limited to English publications indexed in the Scopus database, which may not cover studies in other languages and may also be subject to publication bias. Most existing studies use cross-sectional designs, making it difficult to determine the causal direction of the proposed pathways. The integrated framework proposed in Figure 2 is based on a theoretical synthesis of the literature, and future empirical testing with primary data from Chinese vocational college teachers is still needed to verify these hypothetical pathways.

Future research should use longitudinal or experimental designs to empirically test the pathways, examine whether there are differences between public and private vocational colleges and between urban and rural settings, exploring the moderating role of occupational stress and burnout, and develop intervention programs that target the entire pathway rather than individual factors.

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