

การศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความห่างเหินทางจิตใจ สุขภาวะในการทำงาน และความผูกพันในงานของอาจารย์สอนภาษาชาวจีน

The Relationship Between Psychological Detachment, Work-related Well-Being, and Work Engagement Among Chinese Language Teachers

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาอิทธิพลของพฤติกรรมความห่างเหินทางจิตใจที่มีผลต่อการมีส่วนร่วมในการทำงานของอาจารย์ชาวจีนที่สอนภาษาต่างประเทศ เพื่อตรวจสอบความเป็นกลางของสุขภาวะความสัมพันธ์ โดยพิจารณาจากการวิจัยที่มีจำกัดในแวดวงวิชาการจีนเกี่ยวกับความห่างเหินทางจิตใจและการมีส่วนร่วมในการทำงาน ตามทฤษฎีที่ว่าด้วยการบำรุงรักษาไว้ซึ่งทรัพยากร ตรวจสอบพบว่าอาจารย์ชาวจีนสามารถเพิ่มการมีส่วนร่วมในการทำงานผ่านพฤติกรรมความห่างเหินทางจิตใจโดยการเพิ่มระดับสุขภาวะในการทำงานได้ โดยการวิจัยนี้ใช้วิธีการทำแบบสอบถามโดยใช้การเลือกสุ่มตัวอย่างแบบสโนว์บอล โดยมีอาจารย์ชาวจีนจำนวน 130 คนเข้าร่วม วิเคราะห์ผลทางสถิติและการถดถอยดำเนินการโดยใช้โปรแกรม SPSS 25.0 สรุปผลได้สามประการคือ: (1) ความห่างเหินทางจิตใจส่งผลเชิงบวกต่อความผูกพันในการทำงานของอาจารย์ชาวจีน (2) สุขภาวะที่ดีในการทำงานส่งผลเชิงบวกต่อความผูกพันในการทำงาน (3) สุขภาวะที่ดีในการทำงานเป็นสื่อกลางบางส่วนต่อความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความห่างเหินทางจิตใจและการมีส่วนร่วมในการทำงาน การค้นพบนี้ให้ข้อมูลเชิงลึกแก่มหาวิทยาลัยไทยเพื่อสร้างระบบการจัดการที่มีประสิทธิภาพมากขึ้นสำหรับอาจารย์ชาวจีน และเสนอมุมมองใหม่สำหรับสถาบันการศึกษาและผู้ที่มีส่วนกำหนดนโยบาย

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the influence of psychological detachment behavior on work engagement among Chinese language teachers, and to verify the mediating role of Work-Related Well-Being (WWB) in this relationship. Given the limited research in Chinese academia on psychological detachment and work engagement among Chinese teachers related to Chinese language teaching, this study examines how teachers enhance their work engagement through psychological detachment behavior by improving their work-related well-being based on conservation of resources (COR) theory. This study conducted a snowball sampling method for questionnaire data collection, involving 130 Chinese teachers. Statistical and regression analyses were conducted using SPSS 25.0 and Mplus, leading to three conclusions: (1) Psychological detachment positively affects work engagement among Chinese teachers; (2) Work-related Well-Being positively affects work engagement; (3) Work-related Well-Being partially mediates the relationship between psychological detachment and work engagement. The findings provide insights for Thai universities to establish more effective management systems for teachers related to Chinese language teaching and offer new perspectives for educational institutions and policymakers.

Keywords: Chinese Teacher, Psychological Detachment, Work-Related Well-Being, Work Engagement

1. Introduction

In recent years, as the speed of spreading Chinese language and culture globally has accelerated, particularly in Thailand, an increasing number of universities have established Chinese-related departments. As of 2022, among the 156 universities in Thailand, 82 have established Chinese language programs (Luo & Hu, 2022). As Chinese education develops, the demand for Chinese teachers has increased sharply, and more Chinese language teachers are working in diverse cultural and educational environments around the world. While this emerging field offers many opportunities for professional growth and cultural exchange, it also presents some challenges that affect the work-related Well-being and work engagement of Chinese language teachers. Issues such as anxiety have drawn increasing academic attention (Xia, 2021). Scholars have conducted research on the work engagement of English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) teachers, emphasizing that work engagement significantly impacts education quality and language learners' performance, and argued that it is highly significant to investigate the factors influencing work engagement among teachers in the field of Chinese language education (Fathi et al., 2023).

Xia (2021) highlighted that to address the shortage of teachers for Chinese as a foreign language, many universities have transitioned English language teachers to this role. During this process, these teachers need to adapt to new requirements, enhance their skills, and manage anxiety through positive psychological adjustments. Positive psychological adjustment is related to the state of psychological detachment. However, research on psychological detachment in China is still in the exploratory stage, and studies that consider psychological well-being as a mediating variable are lacking. such as Wan et al. (2023) highlighted a significant gap in research within the Chinese academic community regarding psychological detachment and its perceived effects on behavior. Li (2021) research also indicated that both theoretically and practically, the study of psychological detachment in the fields of organizational behavior and human resource management in is relatively limited (Ren & Zhao, 2021).

In recent years, numerous studies have emphasized the importance of enhancing the well-being, life satisfaction, and overall welfare of Chinese employees and students (Chou et al., 2022; Chou, 2024). Additionally, Wan et al. (2023) highlights the critical role of improving work engagement for both individual and organizational development. As competition intensifies and work pace quickens, the boundaries between work and personal life increasingly blur. Therefore, prioritizing opportunities for psychological detachment to enhance work engagement has become a vital concern for modern organizations (Wan et al., 2023). While psychological detachment has been shown to reduce emotional exhaustion and thereby promote work engagement (Wan et al., 2021, 2023), However, no scholars have specifically studied the psychological detachment and work engagement of Chinese language teachers. Thus, this study aims to validate psychological detachment as a key factor in enhancing work engagement, providing scientific evidence to address practical management issues related to psychological detachment and work engagement among Chinese language teachers, thereby filling this important research gap.

This study aims to explore the factors affecting the work engagement of Chinese language teachers and to validate psychological detachment as a key factor in enhancing work engagement, as well as the mediating role of work-related well-being in this relationship. This study's findings can provide insights for Thai universities in formulating and implementing management systems, ultimately leading to a more effective management framework that better supports teachers' psychological well-being and professional development. In summary, the specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To verify whether work-related well-being mediates the relationship between psychological detachment behaviors and work engagement.
2. To verify whether psychological detachment behaviors directly and positively influence work engagement.
3. Based on the research findings, to propose practical recommendations that provide implementation references for establishing a more effective teacher management system.

2. Literature review

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

Li (2023) was based on Hobfoll's (1989) conservation of resources (COR) theory, employees need to detach from their work environment and work-related stress during the recovery process by seeking new resources to replenish those that have been depleted. First, this research employs COR to construct the pathway between psychological detachment and work engagement. Moreover, based on the perspective of psychological detachment from work-related stress, this study expands the theory to establish the mediating role of work-related well-being in the relationship between psychological detachment and work engagement.

2.2 Work-related Well-Being (WWB)

Workplace well-being differs from personal subjective well-being. Workplace well-being refers to feelings experienced during work, while personal well-being is primarily reflected in one's overall life. Work-related well-being encompasses the overall quality of an employee's workplace experience and performance (Zheng et al, 2023). Subsequently, scholars have defined employees' work-related well-being as the overall experience of job

satisfaction and the positive or negative emotions generated in the workplace (Xin et al., 2021). Zheng et al. (2015) pointed out that work-related well-being refers to the level of satisfaction employees have concerning factors related to their work environment. This study adopts the definition by Xin et al. (2021) and Zheng et al. (2015) , defining Chinese language teachers' Work-related Well-Being as their overall experience of job satisfaction and the level of satisfaction with work environment-related factors.

2.3 Work Engagement (WE)

Gao et al. (2021) defined work engagement as the state in which employees exert effort in the organization. Additionally, Lai et al. (2017) defined work engagement as "the overall state in which employees demonstrate cognitive, emotional, and physical involvement in their work. This study adopted the definition proposed by Lai et al. (2017), defining the work engagement of Chinese language teachers as the overall state in which teachers demonstrate cognitive, emotional, and physical involvement in their work.

2.4 Psychological Detachment (PD)

Li (2021) pointed out that psychological detachment is a psychological state in which individuals feel they have detached from the work context. Wan et al. (2023) further clarified psychological detachment as a psychological experience in which individuals, during non-working hours, detach both spatially and mentally from work and cease thinking about work. This study adopted the definition proposed by Wan et al. (2023), defining psychological detachment for Chinese language teachers as a psychological experience during their lunch breaks, where they detach both spatially and mentally from work, ceasing to think about work.

2.5 Research Hypothesis

The Impact of Psychological Detachment on Work-Related Well-Being

Ghost et al. (2020) indicated that creativity in employee engagement is influenced by the moderating effect of psychological detachment. Additionally, Nehra (2023) found that the negative relationship between employees' perceptions of high-involvement work practices (HIWPs) and burnout was more pronounced among employees with higher levels of psychological detachment (Kilroy et al.,2020). Based on these studies, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Psychological detachment has a positive impact on work-related well-being.

The Impact of Work-Related Well-Being on Work Engagement

Okojie et al. (2023) found that positive emotions can significantly enhance work engagement. In a study of 134 university lecturers, Hamzah et al. (2021) discovered that the higher the lecturers' work-related well-being, the stronger their work engagement. Furthermore, Wan et al. (2022) demonstrated a positive correlation between employees' life well-being and work engagement. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Work-related well-being has a positive impact on work engagement.

The Impact of Psychological Detachment on Work Engagement

Both Kühnel et al. (2017) and Wan et al. (2023) found a positive correlation between psychological detachment and work engagement. Sonnentag et al. (2020) and Sonnentag et al. (2010) further pointed out that a high level of psychological detachment can enhance work engagement. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Psychological detachment has a positive impact on work engagement.

The Mediating Role of Work-Related Well-Being in the Relationship Between Psychological Detachment and Work Engagement

Greenier et al. (2021) confirmed that psychological well-being positively influences work engagement among English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) teachers. Scholars have pointed out that lower work involvement is directly related to psychological detachment during off-job time, and that work involvement moderates the relationship between job stressors and psychological detachment (Sonnentag et al. ,2020). Psychological detachment helps individuals conserve physical and psychological resources, such as improving emotional well-being (Wanet al., 2023), which in turn affects their behavior. Based on the above literature, this study infers that the higher the level of psychological detachment among Chinese language teachers, the higher their work-related well-being, which in turn can enhance their work engagement. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Work-related well-being mediates the relationship between psychological detachment and work engagement.

Based on the literature review, the following research framework can be synthesized for the study. The research framework was shown in the below in Figure 1.

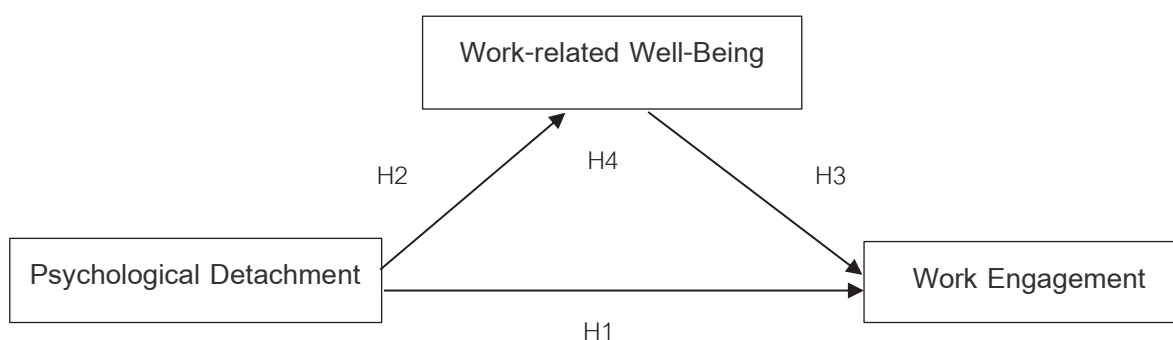


Figure 1 The Research Framework

3. Methodology

3.1 Sampling and Samples

This study employed a questionnaire survey method to collect data in 2024 using the Snowball Sampling. According to Tinsley and Tinsley (1987), the acceptable ratio of questionnaire items to participants is 1:5. This study's questionnaire consists of 26 items, requiring a total of 130 valid responses. 130 Chinese teachers related to Chinese language teaching were selected from 1 province in China, meeting the requirement suggested by Tinsley and Tinsley (1987). Mplus and SPSS 25.0 are used for reliability and regression analysis.

3.2 Questionnaire Design and Measurements

Work-Related Well-Being Scale: This study adopts the work-related well-being dimension proposed by Zheng et al. (2015). The scale includes six items such as "My work is very interesting" and "Overall, I am very satisfied with my job." The study uses a five-point Likert scale where "1" represents "strongly disagree," "2" represents

"disagree," "3" represents "neutral," "4" represents "agree," and "5" represents "strongly agree." The higher the total score, the higher the teacher's work-related well-being.

Psychological Detachment Scale: This study references the translated items by Ren and Zhao (2021). The scale includes four items such as "During non-working hours, I can forget work-related matters" and "During non-working hours, I don't think about work at all." A five-point Likert scale is used where "1" represents "strongly disagree," "2" represents "disagree," "3" represents "neutral," "4" represents "agree," and "5" represents "strongly agree." The higher the total score, the higher the teacher's level of psychological detachment.

Work Engagement Scale: This study adopts the 18-item Chinese Work Engagement Scale by Lai et al. (2017), including items such as "I put a lot of energy into my work" and "I do my best to complete my work." The five-point Likert scale is used where "1" represents "strongly disagree," "2" represents "disagree," "3" represents "neutral," "4" represents "agree," and "5" represents "strongly agree." The higher the total score, the higher the teacher's level of work engagement.

3.3 Data Collection

The survey being conducted in July 2024. Ultimately, 140 questionnaires were collected using this method. To ensure data quality, the study filtered out surveys that had identical answers for both reverse and forward questions, leading to the removal of 10 invalid surveys. This process resulted in a total of 130 valid surveys, resulting in an effective response rate of 92.86%.

3.4 Reliability and Validity Test

This study uses a quantitative research approach. After distributing the questionnaires and collecting the responses, invalid questionnaires were discarded, and valid samples were coded for analysis using SPSS version 25. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha, with higher values indicating greater reliability. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value and Bartlett's test were used to assess the appropriateness of factor analysis. The study applied the Bootstrap method, using confidence intervals (CI) to verify the hypotheses. A commonly accepted threshold for reliability is 0.7 (Kaiser, 1974).

According to reliability and validity, this study conducted Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's tests, resulting in a KMO value of 0.840 for Psychological Detachment, 0.909 for Work-Related Well-Being, and 0.942 for Work Engagement. All Cronbach's alpha values exceeded 0.8, indicating good reliability and validity (Kaiser, 1974). Moreover, both Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are essential for evaluating convergent and discriminant validity among constructs. In this study, convergent validity was assessed by examining the relationships among various measures of the same construct. This involves verifying whether different indicators that are supposed to measure the same construct indeed converge or correlate strongly with one another. This study adheres to the recommendations set forth by Fornell and Larcker (1981), which suggest that Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values should exceed 0.5 and Composite Reliability (CR) should be greater than 0.6. According to Hair et al. (1998), a common method bias may be present if the first factor accounts for more than 40% of the variance. In this study, the first factor accounts for less than 40% of the variance. Therefore, both confirmatory factor analysis and Harman's single-factor test were employed to assess common method variance among the variables. The results indicate that there is no significant common method bias in this study.

4.1 Demographic Information

The gender distribution of the respondents showed that 88 participants were male, making up 65.19% of the total, while 47 participants were female, accounting for 34.81%. The age distribution of respondents in this study varied across several age groups. The majority of participants were between 31 and 35 years old, accounting for 43 respondents (31.85%). This was followed by 28 respondents (20.74%) in the 26–30 years old group, and 19 respondents (14.07%) aged 36–40 years. The 41–45 years old group comprised 20 respondents (14.81%), while the youngest group, 21–25 years old, included 14 respondents (10.37%). Finally, aged 46 years and above with 6 respondents (8.14%).

4.2 Pearson correlation coefficients

Pearson correlation coefficients range from -1 to 1, indicating the degree of linear correlation between two variables. Positive values between 0 and 1 indicate a positive correlation, while negative values between -1 and 0 indicate a negative correlation. The closer the correlation coefficient is to 1 or -1, the stronger the linear relationship. The Pearson correlation coefficients are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 The Pearson correlation coefficients.

| Variable | Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (SD) | Psychological Detachment | Work-Related Well-Being | Work Engagement |
|-----------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Psychological Detachment | 4.256 | 0.793 | 1 | | |
| Work-Related Well-Being | 3.781 | 0.828 | 0.244** | 1 | |
| Work Engagement | 4.233 | 0.738 | 0.708** | 0.456** | 1 |

Note. * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

Table 1. Psychological Detachment has a mean of 4.256 and a standard deviation of 0.793. Work-Related Well-Being has a mean of 3.781 and a standard deviation of 0.828. Work Engagement has a mean of 4.233 and a standard deviation of 0.738. The mediation results are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2 The result of hierarchical regression (M= Work-Related Well-Being) (N=130)

| PATH | Type of Effect | Effect Value | 95% CI | z/t Value | p Value |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|---------|
| Psychological Detachment → Work-Related Well-Being → Work Engagement | Indirect Effect | 0.062 | 0.01, 0.129 | 2.056 | 0.040 |
| Psychological Detachment → Work-Related Well-Being | Path 1 (X → M) | 0.252 | 0.057, 0.447 | 2.532 | 0.013 |
| Work-Related Well-Being → Work Engagement | Path 2 (M → Y) | 0.248 | 0.143, 0.353 | 4.643 | 0.000 |
| Psychological Detachment → Work Engagement | Path 3 (X → Y) Direct Effect | 0.522 | 0.401, 0.643 | 8.454 | 0.000 |
| Psychological Detachment → Work Engagement | Total Effect | 0.585 | 0.457, 0.712 | 9.005 | 0.000 |

Note. * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

Table 2 presents Boot LLCI represents the lower bound of the 95% confidence interval from Bootstrap sampling, and Boot ULCI represents the upper bound of the 95% confidence interval. If the 95% confidence interval of a path coefficient does not include zero, the effect of that path is statistically significant. Collinearity diagnostics showed VIF values ranging from 1.264 to 2.423, indicating no collinearity issues.

To sum up, the mediation path from psychological detachment to work-related well-being to work engagement is significant ($p = 0.04 < 0.05$). When work-related well-being is included as a mediator in the model, the effect of psychological detachment on work engagement decreases from 0.585 ($p < 0.001$) to 0.522 ($p < 0.001$), indicating that work-related well-being partially mediates the effect of psychological detachment on work engagement.

Based on Table 2, the hypotheses results are shown as follows Table 3:

Table 3 Hypotheses' Result

| Hypothesis | Result |
|--|---------------------------|
| Hypothesis 1 (H1): Psychological detachment has a positive effect on work-related well-being. | Supported ($p = 0.013$) |
| Hypothesis 2 (H2): Work-related well-being has a positive effect on work engagement. | Supported ($p = 0.000$) |
| Hypothesis 3 (H3): Psychological detachment has a positive effect on work engagement. | Supported ($p = 0.000$) |
| Hypothesis 4 (H4): Work-related well-being mediates the relationship between psychological detachment and work engagement. | Supported ($p = 0.040$) |

5. Conclusion and Discussion

Discussion

In the context of limited research on the psychological detachment behaviors of Chinese language teachers in universities in Thailand and China, this study highlights the importance of psychological detachment and work-related well-being in influencing teachers' work engagement. The findings indicate that higher levels of psychological detachment are associated with increased work-related well-being, which in turn enhances work engagement among Chinese language teachers. This result aligns with the views of Wan et al. (2023), who argue that psychological detachment helps individuals replenish physiological and psychological resources, such as vitality and emotional well-being, thereby impacting their behavior.

Regarding the work-related well-being of Chinese language teachers, the average score was 3.781 (out of 5), which falls between "neutral" (3) and "satisfied" (4) and is lower than the average scores for psychological detachment (4.256) and work engagement (4.233). This finding is consistent with the views of Wan et al. (2023) and reveals that Chinese language teachers' well-being is at a moderately high level and significantly impacts work engagement. Psychological detachment is considered a crucial factor in enhancing work-related well-being. This conclusion is innovative and has practical implications, which will be discussed further in the following section.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the study results, the following three practical recommendations for Chinese language teacher education management are proposed:

1. Promote Psychological Detachment Behaviors: Organizations should encourage Chinese language teachers to adopt effective psychological detachment strategies, such as implementing regular breaks or flexible lunch hours, to help them restore their energy and mental state, thereby enhancing their work-related well-being.

2. Enhance Work-Related Well-Being: Schools should focus on improving teachers' work-related well-being by providing more support and resources and creating a positive work environment to increase job satisfaction and happiness. The study confirms that psychological detachment is a significant factor in enhancing work-related well-being. Increased psychological detachment significantly improves teachers' work-related well-being and, in turn, promotes work engagement. Therefore, based on Wan et al. (2023), psychological detachment helps employees effectively manage work stress and maintain health and vitality. Since psychological detachment is influenced by work contexts and individual characteristics, future educational management should explore the differential impacts of psychological detachment behaviors across various work contexts.

3. Optimize Work Engagement Strategies: Building on the improvements in work-related well-being and psychological detachment, targeted measures should be implemented to further enhance work engagement. These measures include regular psychological assessments, reasonable lunch break policies, and providing psychological counseling services.

6. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Firstly, this study focuses solely on psychological detachment behaviors. Future research should delve deeper into the effects, mechanisms, and boundary conditions of psychological detachment behaviors and states on work engagement.

Secondly, this study relies exclusively on self-reported questionnaires. Future research could incorporate interview methods to obtain more comprehensive conclusions.

Lastly, this study specifically targets Chinese language teachers. Future research could extend to studying foreign Chinese language teachers in Thailand to explore more targeted findings and extensions.

Despite these limitations, this study contributes valuable conclusions. Firstly, it verifies the significant positive effect of psychological detachment behaviors on the work-related well-being of Chinese language teachers and reveals the positive role of psychological detachment in enhancing work-related well-being. Secondly, it confirms that work-related well-being significantly positively impacts work engagement. These findings provide empirical evidence for educational management on how to enhance teacher engagement by improving work-related well-being.

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