

Resource-Depleting and Resource-Enabling Pathways to Organizational Performance: Extending the SOR Framework in Vocational Education

Wenyan Ma¹, Khunanan Sukpasjaroen^{1,*}, Aroonroj Boonkrong¹ & Rerkchai Fooprateepsiri¹

¹Chakrabongse Bhuvanarth International College of Interdisciplinary Studies, Rajamangala University of Technology Tawan-ok, Bangkok, Thailand

*Correspondence: Chakrabongse Bhuvanarth International College of Interdisciplinary Studies, Rajamangala University of Technology Tawan-ok, Bangkok, Thailand. E-mail: khunanan_su@rmutto.ac.th

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Abstract

Based on and extending the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory, this study conceptualizes workload as a resource-depleting stimulus and person-job fit as a resource-enabling stimulus. In addition, the study develops a dual-pathway model to examine how work-related stimuli are associated with influences organizational performance through instructors' internal states. This study used a sample of 457 instructors from vocational colleges in Guizhou Province, China, and employed structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the proposed hypotheses. The results indicated that workload significantly reduces job satisfaction and increases turnover intention. Person-job fit showed the opposite correlation pattern. Job satisfaction has a significant inhibitory effect on turnover intention, indicating that instructors' positive and negative internal states are dynamically correlated rather than operating independently. Job satisfaction and turnover intention are significant predictors of organizational performance, together constituting a dual pathway that affects organizational outcomes. The mediation analysis showed that job satisfaction and turnover intention play the main roles in mediating the relationship between the work-related stimuli and organizational performance, and the positive pathway driven by person-job fit and the negative stress-driven pathway demonstrated asymmetrical effects. The findings reveal the asymmetric ways in which work-related stimuli are associated with organizational performance under the "Double High Plan." They also highlight the importance of managing workload, strengthening person-job fit, and enhancing instructors' job satisfaction to improve organizational performance and support the sustainable development of vocational colleges.

Keywords: higher vocational education, organizational performance, resource-depleting pathway, resource-enabling pathway

1. Introduction

Currently, the vocational education systems in different countries require fundamental restructuring according to the rapidly changing industrial structure, technological transformation, and labor market upgrading. In this situation, educational institutions are supposed to train qualified skilled workers. At the same time, their flexibility should be maintained, the teaching quality should be ensured, and the sustainability of the institution should be guaranteed. Therefore, the organizational performance of vocational education has become an important issue in educational policies and management. With the increasing international economic competition and continuous industrial changes, human capital quality becomes a crucial factor in enhancing the country's competitiveness. As an important part of the educational system, higher vocational education bears the responsibility of cultivating high-skilled, application-oriented talent, accelerating industrial upgrading, and promoting regional economic development (Bing & Zhenzhen, 2025). In China, the implementation of the "Double High Plan" for the deep integration of industry and education and the expansion of competency-based training systems have significantly changed the instructors' tasks. At present, the instructors are required to perform teaching, scientific research, school-enterprise collaboration, practical training guidance, performance evaluation, and student management. This institutional reform has increased the job responsibilities and expanded the role expectations of the instructors.

The working conditions and internal states of instructors in higher vocational colleges are closely related to the

educational quality and the effectiveness of the organization (Lv et al., 2022). Instructors in higher vocational colleges generally have a heavy workload (Isaiah et al., 2025). Apart from teaching, they also deal with administrative matters, school–enterprise collaboration, practical teaching guidance, performance assessment and student affairs management. Under such a demanding situation, the repeated heavy workload may gradually exhaust the cognitive and emotional resources of the instructors (Li et al., 2025). This might reduce the positive work experience and increase turnover intention (Anees et al., 2021). Another important element for the efficient operation of the organization is the person–job fit. It reflects the compatibility between employees’ abilities and job requirements, and whether the organizational resources meet employees’ career needs (Kakar et al., 2023). Studies have indicated that a good fit between people and their jobs results in positive outcomes such as higher job satisfaction (Li et al., 2023), lower turnover intention (Kakar et al., 2021), and better job performance (Kansal & Sengupta, 2024). However, most previous research focused on individual stressors or organizational resources and has ignored the coexistence of performance-depleting and performance-enhancing factors in vocational education organizations.

Although the stimulus–organism–response (SOR) model has been applied in organizational behavior studies recently, its use in vocational education remains limited. Previous research based on the SOR model has mainly concentrated on consumer behavior, digital technology adoption, and innovation management (Yetkin Ozbuk & Oktay Bayhan, 2025). Consequently, relatively little is known about how contrasting organizational stimuli simultaneously shape instructors’ internal states and, in turn, organizational performance in educational settings. In particular, the mechanisms through which resource-depleting conditions (such as workload) and resource-enabling conditions (such as person–job fit) operate through related positive and negative psychological states have not been sufficiently integrated within a single explanatory framework. Despite growing evidence that workload and person–job fit are associated with important employee outcomes, existing research in vocational education has largely examined these factors separately or focused on isolated individual outcomes. This leaves three interconnected problems unresolved: first, whether resource-depleting and resource-enabling work conditions can be conceptualized simultaneously as distinct stimuli within an extended SOR framework; second, how these contrasting stimuli jointly influence the related organismic states of job satisfaction and turnover intention; and third, whether these internal states constitute differentiated pathways through which work conditions are associated with organizational performance. Addressing these gaps is particularly important in Chinese higher vocational colleges, where institutional reform and the “Double High Plan” have expanded instructors’ role expectations while increasing the need to sustain organizational effectiveness.

Therefore, this study extends the SOR model by defining workload as a resource-depleting stimulus and person–job fit as a resource-enabling stimulus. Instead of following the traditional single-path organizational model, this study proposes a dual-pathway model in which the negative organizational conditions, such as workload, activate a stress-reducing withdrawal pathway (increasing turnover intention and decreasing job satisfaction) and the positive conditions, such as person–job fit, activate a motivation-promoting pathway (decreasing turnover intention and increasing job satisfaction). Specifically, this study examines how both workload and person–job fit affect organizational performance through these two related internal states: job satisfaction and turnover intention. By integrating the resource-enabling and resource-depleting organizational stimuli into a comprehensive analysis model, this study expands the SOR model. It uncovers the asymmetric internal pathways through which the working conditions influence the organizational performance in vocational education. Furthermore, by focusing on the Chinese higher vocational colleges, which are going through institutional reforms, this study also provides contextual evidence on organizational stability under the ongoing educational reform and strict accountability systems.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Model

The SOR model indicates that external environmental stimuli do not directly determine behavioral results. Instead, they modify behavioral responses by affecting the internal states of individuals (Yetkin Ozbuk & Oktay Bayhan, 2025). In organizational settings, working conditions are considered stimulating-cognitive and affective evaluations of employees from the internal state, which then influences the organizational results. Although the SOR model has mainly been used in the study of consumer behaviour (Irimia-Diéguez et al., 2025), its explanatory mechanism is also applicable to vocational education organizations, which involve emotional labour, institutional responsibility and multiple role demands. In such environments, the instructors in higher vocational colleges often encounter various problems and complex challenges. They need to deal with teaching pressure, administrative evaluations,

school–enterprise collaboration, and student management. Thus, the external organizational conditions may have a great impact on the internal states of the instructors and consequently on the organizational performance (Jehanzeb et al., 2025). Under this background, it is significant to consider how the SOR model can be modified to fit the vocational education context.

Based on this foundation, this study further develops the traditional SOR model by proposing a dual-pathway view. Specifically, the organizational stimuli are regarded as two different kinds: resource-depleting stimuli and resource-enabling stimuli. The workload is defined as a resource-depleting stimulus, which continuously consumes the cognitive, affective, and temporal resources of the instructors. On the contrary, person-job fit represents a resource-enabling stimulus, indicating that the compatibility between individual abilities and job requirements could improve satisfaction and work motivation. By establishing these pathways, we can better understand how the experiences of instructors are affected in the vocational educational environment.

Consequently, this study suggests two asymmetrical organizational pathways. The first one is the stress-based depletion pathway, where heavy workloads increase turnover intention and weaken organizational performance. The second one is the motivational enhancement pathway, where the person-job fit promotes positive evaluations and strengthens the organizational contribution. This dual-pathway viewpoint shows that the organizational performance in vocational education cannot be regarded as the result of a single linear mechanism, but rather as the effect of the competing psychological processes triggered by different organizational stimuli, as shown in Figure 1.

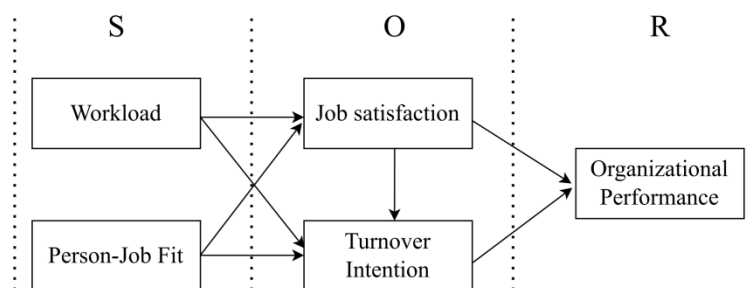


Figure 1. Model Diagram Based on the SOR Model

2.2 Hypotheses Development

2.2.1 Workload, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover Intention

In vocational education organizations, workload is a typical resource-depleting stimulus characterized by both an excessive volume of tasks and the intensive cognitive and affective demands required to fulfill multifaceted role expectations (Herawati et al., 2023). When instructors are repeatedly faced with high-intensity and multitasking environments, their limited internal resources will gradually be used up. As a result, their cognitive evaluation of the working environment will be impaired, and they will have lower job satisfaction (Cayupe et al., 2023). In the extended SOR model, workload functions as a negative stimulus (S), resulting in resource depletion in the organism (O) and subsequently decreasing the positive evaluations. Several empirical studies in the field of education indicate that a heavy teaching load, research pressure, and administrative disturbances have adverse effects on the evaluation of instructors' professional status, which in turn decreases their job satisfaction (Anees et al., 2021; Janib et al., 2022). Therefore, it is thought that there exists a negative correlation between the workload and job satisfaction; that is, an increase in the workload will result in a decrease in job satisfaction.

Furthermore, if the restoration of resources cannot balance the excessive workload, the instructors may form a withdrawal attitude as a protective reaction. This transition from resource depletion to a tendency to leave the job is important in the system. Constantly being exposed to an environment with insufficient resources usually brings about stress, such as increased tension and anxiety, thus leading to an obvious tendency to leave the job (Granziera et al., 2025; Situmorang & Wardhani, 2022). Based on the resource depletion theory, the workload affects the internal adaptability of individuals and promotes the tendency to leave the job directly. Hence, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Workload has a significant negative influence on job satisfaction.

H2: Workload has a significant positive influence on turnover intention.

2.2.2 Person-Job Fit, Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intention

Person–job fit operates as a key resource-enabling factor and comprises two facets. The demands–abilities facet captures how well an instructor’s professional competencies align with what the post requires, while the needs–supplies facet captures how far the organizational environment meets the instructor’s developmental expectations. (Van Woerkom et al., 2024). A good person–job fit can enhance the instructors’ confidence in handling difficult tasks, thereby serving as a supportive resource that promotes favorable working conditions (Yen et al., 2023). Several empirical studies have indicated that person–job fit is a significant precursor to job satisfaction, as it provides a sense of achievement and contentment in work (Fatmawati & Ambarwati, 2022; Susanty et al., 2025). In the extended SOR model, person–job fit as a positive stimulus(S) enhances an organism’s resource possession and motivation, resulting in higher job satisfaction.

Furthermore, person–job fit not only improves the positive internal states but also reduces the negative ones. When there is a good match between individuals and jobs, instructors are less prone to suffer from chronic stress and dissatisfaction, which lead to a tendency to leave the organization (Kakar et al., 2021). This resource-enabling factor increases professional integration, thereby directly preventing the formation of turnover intention (Kakar et al., 2023; Xiao et al., 2021). By concurrently supplying the psychological resources needed for meeting job requirements and the organizational resources to realize personal career plans, a high person–job fit maintains a stable and committed internal condition contrary to turnover intention. Therefore, we suggest the following hypotheses:

H3: Person-job fit has a significantly positive influence on job satisfaction.

H4: Person-job fit has a significantly negative influence on turnover intention.

2.2.3 Job Satisfaction, Turnover Intention and Organizational Performance

Within the SOR model, internal states of organisms act as the main causes for behavioral and organizational outcomes. It is assumed that job satisfaction, as an overall assessment of resource availability, has a direct and strong impact on organizational performance (Abawa & Obse, 2024). Based on the theory of social exchange, when instructors have higher job satisfaction due to favorable conditions, they will show more dedication, share knowledge, and use their discretionary power. These actions contribute to the improvement of organizational effectiveness (Ahmad et al., 2023; Ali et al., 2025). In the educational sector, it enhances teaching effectiveness and promotes students' growth (Indarti et al., 2017). Therefore, job satisfaction is regarded as an important criterion for evaluating organizational efficiency.

Moreover, the SOR theory indicates that these internal factors are closely related. Both the theoretical and empirical results show a strong inverse relationship: higher job satisfaction, indicating a better working environment, can prevent employees from leaving the organization, which is a major cognitive reason for turnover. This relationship implies that the internal system possesses self-improving properties; when the employees are satisfied, they will not intend to resign (Dodanwala et al., 2023). Notably, whether these two internal states should be regarded as opposite poles of a single evaluative continuum, as two mutually independent reactions to the work environment, or as dynamically interrelated states remains debated in the literature (Sager et al., 1998; Zhang et al., 2017); consistent with the SOR logic, we treat them as interrelated, such that a favourable internal evaluation actively suppresses the withdrawal cognition. Hence, we propose the following hypotheses:

H5: Job satisfaction has a significant positive effect on organizational performance.

H6: Job satisfaction has a significant negative effect on turnover intention.

Turnover intention, which precedes actual employee turnover, signals psychological detachment from the organization and exerts a detrimental impact on organizational outcomes. Human capital theory implies that turnover intention not only shows the possibility of talent loss in the future but also leads to decreases in employees’ commitment and team cohesion, thus weakening organizational performance (Auerbach & Green, 2025; Park & Shaw, 2013). Empirical research finds that turnover intention reduces work motivation and engagement, which in turn hinders the attainment of organizational goals (Haque, 2021; Lin & Huang, 2021). In the dual-pathway model, turnover intention represents a stress-based withdrawal pathway where resource-depleted factors negatively influence performance. Therefore, we put forward the following hypothesis:

H7: Turnover intention has a significant negative impact on organizational performance.

By combining the dual-pathway concept of the extended SOR model, this study suggests that job satisfaction and turnover intention play different mediating roles. Particularly, it states that there are two asymmetrical mediating channels. One is a motivational-enhancing channel where resource-enabling factors (person-job fit) improve

organizational performance by increasing job satisfaction. The other is a stress-related depleting channel where resource-depleting factors (workload) deteriorate organizational performance by raising turnover intention and decreasing job satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H8: Job satisfaction mediates the relation between workload and organizational performance.

H9: Job satisfaction mediates the relation between person-job fit and organizational performance.

H10: Turnover intention mediates the relation between workload and organizational performance.

H11: Turnover intention mediates the relation between person-job fit and organizational performance.

3. Methods

3.1 Sampling and Data Collection

This study used a cross-sectional survey design and collected data from the instructors in higher vocational colleges of Guizhou Province, China. Due to the limitations of research resources, a combination of stratified and snowball sampling methods was employed to ensure the representativeness of the area. First, Guizhou Province was divided into nine administrative divisions, namely Guiyang, Zunyi, Liupanshui, Anshun, Bijie, Tongren, Qiandongnan, Qiannan and Qianxinan, to cover instructors from various regions in the survey. Then, snowball sampling was conducted within each stratum to select the subjects.

The data were collected through an anonymous online questionnaire because of its low cost and wide coverage. The questionnaire provided a detailed explanation of the research objectives, contents of the survey, use of the data, and completion requirements. All participants provided voluntary informed consent prior to participating in the survey. The data collection lasted from September to October 2025. After removing duplicate answers or incomplete information from the 509 questionnaires obtained, 457 valid responses were retained, which resulted in a valid response rate of 89.78%. In order to investigate the adequacy of the sample size, a post-hoc statistical power analysis was conducted using G*Power 3.1.9 (Faul et al., 2009). With a small effect size of $f^2 = 0.05$, a statistical power of 95%, and three predictors in the most complex regression model, the estimated minimum necessary sample size was 377. The final valid sample of 457 is larger than this value, suggesting that there is sufficient statistical power for this study. Table 1 displays the demographic characteristics of the sample.

3.2 Measures

Workload, person-job fit, job satisfaction, turnover intention, and organizational performance were each captured with a multi-item scale drawn from instruments whose reliability and validity are already documented. Wording was locally adapted to the higher vocational-college context without altering the original constructs, and five management scholars pre-reviewed the adapted items for clarity, relevance, and fit. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert-type format anchored at 1 = “strongly disagree” and 5 = “strongly agree.”

3.2.1 Organizational Performance Scale

Following the balanced scorecard tradition (Al-Nsour, 2012; Algobaisi & Sweiti, 2023; Jiang, 2015; Zangouinezhad & Moshabaki, 2011), this 16-item scale spans four facets—financial, customer, internal process, and learning-and-growth. The corresponding Cronbach’s α values were 0.788, 0.846, 0.887, and 0.858, with 0.935 for the full scale.

3.2.2 Job Satisfaction Scale

Sixteen items covering work itself, pay, promotion, supervision, and co-workers were taken from a well-established scale (Mulyawan et al., 2021). Subscale α values were 0.877, 0.910, 0.881, 0.913, and 0.925, and the composite scale reached 0.954.

3.2.3 Turnover Intention Scale

Nine items tapping thinking of quitting, intention to search, and intention to quit were compiled from (Mulyawan et al., 2021; Sager et al., 1998; Susilowati et al., 2024); one item with a loading under 0.50 was dropped. The three subscales returned α values of 0.830, 0.942, and 0.602, and the overall scale 0.917. Because α is known to be understated for very short subscales (Eisinga et al., 2013), the two-item intention-to-quit dimension ($\alpha = 0.602$) still clears the 0.60 threshold deemed acceptable in exploratory work (Hair et al., 2013); its high composite reliability (CR = 0.961) and the strong overall α (0.917) provide additional evidence of internal consistency.

3.2.4 Workload Scale

Drawing on the job demand–control–support framework (Alexopoulos et al., 2015; A. Chen et al., 2023; Cheng et al., 2003), 13 items were organized into job demands, job control, and social support. The α values were 0.941, 0.880, and 0.821, with an overall coefficient of 0.892.

3.2.5 Person-Job Fit Scale

Six items representing needs–supplies fit and demands–abilities fit were adapted from multiple previous studies (Kakar et al., 2023; Pelealu, 2022). The two dimensions yielded α values of 0.906 and 0.928, and the composite scale 0.938.

3.3 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics summarized respondents' profiles and the means and standard deviations of each variable. Scale reliability was gauged through Cronbach's α , and the hypothesized relations among workload, person–job fit, job satisfaction, turnover intention, and organizational performance were estimated with path analysis inside a structural equation model. Mediation was tested with bias-corrected bootstrapping based on 5,000 resamples.

4. Results

4.1 Common Method Variance

To gauge potential common method bias, Harman's single-factor test was applied to an unrotated exploratory factor solution. The largest extracted factor explained only 25.911% of the total variance—comfortably under the 40% criterion frequently cited for this diagnostic—so common method bias was judged unlikely to distort the study's conclusions (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

4.2 Normality, Reliability, and Validity Analysis

Following recommendations (Byrne, 2016), skewness values between -2 and $+2$ and kurtosis values between -7 and $+7$ are considered acceptable. In this study, the skewness of the values lay between -0.500 and 0.307 and the kurtosis between -0.404 and 0.484 . The data can be regarded as approximately normal (see Table 2).

Every standardized loading fell between 0.525 and 0.953, clearing the 0.50 floor (Leguina, 2015). Cronbach's α ranged from 0.892 to 0.954 and composite reliability from 0.958 to 0.978, both well above the 0.70 mark (Shin et al., 2023). Average variance extracted ranged from 0.592 to 0.794, exceeding the 0.50 convergent-validity criterion throughout (Becker et al., 2023). The scales demonstrate sound internal consistency and convergent validity.

Table 2. Factor Loading and Reliability of Constructs

Constructs	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	Skewness	Kurtosis
Organizational performance		0.935	0.958	0.592	-0.318	0.284
Financial 1	0.610					
Financial 2	0.774					
Financial 3	0.688					
Financial 4	0.711					
Customer 1	0.822					
Customer 2	0.823					
Customer 3	0.782					
Customer 4	0.662					
Internal process 1	0.736					
Internal process 2	0.822					
Internal process 3	0.858					
Internal process 4	0.848					
Learning and growth 1	0.706					
Learning and growth 2	0.865					
Learning and growth 3	0.789					
Learning and growth 4	0.763					

Turnover Intention		0.917	0.961	0.760	0.307	-0.404
Thinking of quitting 1	0.525					
Thinking of quitting 2	0.937					
Thinking of quitting 3	0.936					
Intention to search 1	0.877					
Intention to search 2	0.932					
Intention to search 3	0.953					
Intention to quit 2	0.841					
Intention to quit 3	0.891					
Job Satisfaction		0.954	0.978	0.739	-0.088	0.160
Work itself 1	0.833					
Work itself 2	0.755					
Work itself 3	0.837					
Work itself 4	0.785					
Coworkers 1	0.851					
Coworkers 2	0.904					
Coworkers 3	0.938					
Pay 1	0.917					
Pay 2	0.928					
Pay 3	0.801					
Promotion 1	0.861					
Promotion 2	0.864					
Promotion 3	0.812					
Supervision 1	0.864					
Supervision 2	0.893					
Supervision 3	0.888					
Workload		0.892	0.960	0.653	0.086	0.484
Job Control 1	0.913					
Job Control 2	0.928					
Job Control 3	0.902					
Job Control 4	0.845					
Job Demands 1	0.740					
Job Demands 2	0.859					
Job Demands 3	0.860					
Job Demands 4	0.876					
Job Demands 5	0.554					
Social Support 1	0.746					
Social Support 2	0.767					
Social Support 3	0.713					
Social Support 4	0.716					
Person-Job Fit		0.938	0.959	0.794	-0.500	0.325
Needs-Supplies Fit 1	0.791					
Needs-Supplies Fit 2	0.942					
Needs-Supplies Fit 3	0.895					
Demands-Abilities Fit 1	0.946					
Demands-Abilities Fit 2	0.859					
Demands-Abilities Fit 3	0.905					

4.3 Descriptive and Correlation Analysis

Descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation analysis were conducted for all study variables, and the results are presented in Table 3. The overall means for workload, person-job fit, job satisfaction, turnover intention, and organizational performance were 2.898, 3.536, 3.423, 2.347, and 3.530, respectively, with corresponding standard deviations of 0.587, 0.813, 0.693, 0.915, and 0.597, respectively.

Pearson correlations indicated that workload was negatively associated with person-job fit, job satisfaction, and organizational performance ($r = -0.777$, -0.799 , and -0.655), but positively associated with turnover intention ($r = 0.540$); person-job fit and job satisfaction were positively related to organizational performance ($r = 0.701$ and 0.762), whereas turnover intention was negatively related to it ($r = -0.483$).

Table 3. Descriptive and Correlation Analysis

	Mean	SD	Workload	Person-Job Fit	Job Satisfaction	Turnover Intention	Organizational Performance
Workload	2.898	0.587	1				
Person-Job Fit	3.536	0.813	-0.777***	1			
Job Satisfaction	3.423	0.693	-0.799***	0.827***	1		
Turnover Intention	2.347	0.915	0.540***	-0.569***	-0.547***	1	
Organizational Performance	3.530	0.597	-0.655***	0.701***	0.762***	-0.483***	1

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

4.4 Path Analysis

Table 4 and Figure 2 report the structural estimates: standardized coefficients (β), standard errors, p-values, and the variance explained (R^2) in each endogenous construct. Workload negatively predicted job satisfaction (H1: $\beta = -0.395$, $p < 0.001$), but positively predicted turnover intention (H2: $\beta = 0.189$, $p < 0.01$). Person-job fit showed the opposite pattern (H3: $\beta = 0.520$, $p < 0.001$; H4: $\beta = -0.298$, $p < 0.001$). Job satisfaction positively predicted organizational performance (H5: $\beta = 0.711$, $p < 0.001$) and negatively predicted turnover intention (H6: $\beta = -0.149$, $p < 0.05$), whereas turnover intention negatively predicted organizational performance (H7: $\beta = -0.094$, $p < 0.01$).

The models explained 74.6% of the variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.746$), 35.3% of turnover intention ($R^2 = 0.353$), and 58.7% of the variance in organizational performance ($R^2 = 0.587$).

Table 4. Path Analysis Results

Path	β	p	Decision
H1: Workload→Job Satisfaction	-0.395	0.000	Accepted
H2: Workload→Turnover Intention	0.189	0.005	Accepted
H3: Person-Job Fit→Job Satisfaction	0.520	0.000	Accepted
H4: Person-Job Fit→Turnover Intention	-0.298	0.000	Accepted
H5: Job Satisfaction→Organizational Performance	0.711	0.000	Accepted
H6: Job Satisfaction→Turnover Intention	-0.149	0.045	Accepted
H7: Turnover Intention→Organizational Performance	-0.094	0.009	Accepted

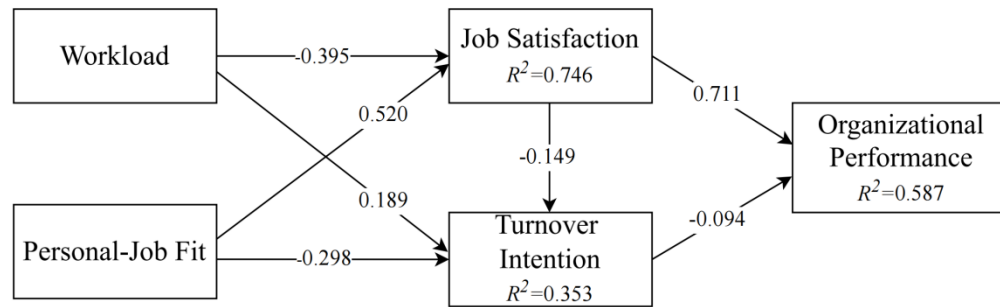


Figure 2. Path Analysis Model Diagram

4.5 Indirect Effects Analysis

Bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) confirmed significant indirect effects through job satisfaction for workload (H8: $\beta = -0.281$, $SE = 0.031$, $p < 0.001$) and person–job fit (H9: $\beta = 0.370$, $SE = 0.036$, $p < 0.001$), and through turnover intention for workload (H10: $\beta = -0.018$, $SE = 0.011$, $p < 0.05$) and person–job fit (H11: $\beta = 0.028$, $SE = 0.015$, $p < 0.05$), based on bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals.

Table 5. Indirect Effect Analysis Results

Indirect Effects Path	β	SE	Bias-corrected 95% CI		P	Decision
			Lower	Upper		
H8: Workload→Job Satisfaction→Organizational Performance	-0.281	0.031	-0.346	-0.223	0.000	Accepted
H9: Person-Job Fit→Job Satisfaction→Organizational Performance	0.370	0.036	0.301	0.440	0.000	Accepted
H10: Workload→Turnover Intention→Organizational Performance	-0.018	0.011	-0.047	-0.002	0.024	Accepted
H11: Person-Job Fit→Turnover Intention→Organizational Performance	0.028	0.015	0.005	0.065	0.019	Accepted

4.6 Comparison of the Indirect Effects (Contrast Analysis)

To test whether the four indirect effects differed in magnitude, they were contrasted pairwise using the same bias-corrected bootstrap routine (5,000 resamples). The workload contrast favored job satisfaction over turnover intention ($\Delta\beta = -0.263$, 95% CI $[-0.327, -0.198]$, $p < 0.001$), as did the person–job fit contrast ($\Delta\beta = 0.342$, 95% CI $[0.266, 0.418]$, $p < 0.001$). Because neither confidence interval contained zero, both differences were statistically significant.

5. Discussion

The findings confirm workload’s role as a resource-draining condition: it depresses job satisfaction (H1) and elevates turnover intention (H2). This pattern fits the theoretical premise that dense teaching loads, administrative duties, and school–enterprise cooperation progressively erode instructors’ cognitive and affective reserves (Cayupe et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2023; Janib et al., 2022; Swedana, 2023). Thus, resource depletion manifests as negative appraisals of their professional roles and elevated turnover intention. This result is consistent with the research findings from various educational systems, which show that workload is one of the main reasons for occupational stress and personnel reduction (Cayupe et al., 2023; Granziera et al., 2025; Swedana, 2023). The positive correlation between workload and turnover intention emphasizes the weakness in the vocational education system. This weakness is particularly noticeable in the “Double High Plan” reform, where instructors bear more responsibilities but do not obtain adequate resource support. Consequently, they may suffer from stress accumulation and ultimately form the intention to leave.

Person–job fit is an important element that affects the allocation of resources. This study reveals that it has a substantial positive influence on job satisfaction (H3) and a substantial negative influence on turnover intention (H4).

This suggests its influence in establishing an internal state of abundant resources and career success (Wang & Wang, 2020). If the instructors' abilities are compatible with the different job requirements and the organization supplies them with the necessary resources for their development, they will have a sense of achievement, competence, and growth. Consequently, this helps to resist the loss of resources and lays the groundwork for a continued positive involvement (Fauzan, 2023; Van Woerkom et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2024). This result has important managerial implications for vocational education under China's "Double High Plan", because the responsibilities of the instructors are increasing rapidly, requiring the simultaneous improvement in teaching quality, academic productivity, cooperation between schools and enterprises, and social services (Zhu et al., 2022). In this changing situation, person-job fit is not just a static criterion for selection, but acts as a dynamic organizational resource that needs to be constantly obtained through specific professional development and job redesign measures (Zhang et al., 2017).

An important finding of this research is the investigation of the dynamic interactions among the components of the organismic system. It has been observed that job satisfaction has a significant inhibiting effect on turnover intention (H6), indicating that these internal factors are interrelated instead of working independently. As noted in the literature review, prior organizational research has predominantly modelled job satisfaction and turnover intention either as two opposite poles of a single evaluative continuum or as independent consequences of the work environment, examined in parallel rather than as mutually influencing states (Puhakka et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2017). However, this result contradicts the common assumption in most organizational studies that job satisfaction and turnover intention are only two opposing sides of a single continuum (Hu et al., 2011; Jogi et al., 2025). Instead, this study reveals a more complicated relationship, where job satisfaction, as a positive resource, actively prevents the occurrence of turnover intention. This implies that improving job satisfaction could also effectively decrease turnover intention.

Moreover, the path analysis results show a notable asymmetry in the relationship between these internal states and organizational performance. Job satisfaction has a strong and significant positive impact on organizational performance ($\beta = 0.711$, H5), while turnover intention, although statistically significant, has a weaker negative effect ($\beta = -0.094$, H7). This asymmetry is one of the main findings of our study. It suggests that in higher vocational colleges, organizational performance is mainly determined by motivational and supportive factors rather than by turnover intention (Zhang et al., 2023).

Therefore, the motivational enhancement approach, mainly based on the fit between individual and job, is the primary way to improve organizational performance. In contrast, the stress-reduction method, depending on workload, has a secondary effect in practical importance (Zeng & Hu, 2024). This indicates that merely reducing the negative factors like workload will not significantly increase organizational performance. Instead, establishing conditions that facilitate resources, for example, by strengthening the match between individual and job, is more likely to be crucial in enhancing organizational performance in vocational education (Michaelis & Findeisen, 2022). This paper also shows the interaction between positive and negative organismic states. It disagrees with the present research opinions, which treat job satisfaction and turnover intention as two separate and independent procedures, and indicates a system with self-enhancing properties (Puhakka et al., 2021). This result is significant for the establishment of organizational measures. Moreover, by taking into account the situation of institutional changes during China's "Double High Plan" reform in vocational education, the study provides contextual evidence of the significance of resource-enabling conditions, particularly in the cases of high role complexity, for organizational stability (Zhang & Yang, 2025).

The study shows that the workload and person-job fit have significant indirect effects on organizational performance through job satisfaction (H8, H9) and turnover intention (H10, H11). These results empirically support the main "organism" mechanism of the extended SOR model. In addition, the indirect effects of passing through job satisfaction are much greater than those passing through turnover intention. This difference between the two mediating pathways was statistically confirmed by the pairwise contrast analysis reported in Section 4.6 ($\Delta\beta = -0.263$ and $\Delta\beta = 0.342$ for workload and person-job fit, respectively; both $p < 0.001$). For example, the indirect effect of workload on organizational performance via job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.281$) is about 15 times stronger than that via turnover intention ($\beta = -0.018$). Similarly, the indirect effect of person-job fit via job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.370$) is obviously larger than that via turnover intention ($\beta = 0.028$). Such findings indicate that the working conditions affect organizational performance not mainly by just inducing or inhibiting turnover intention, but more profoundly by influencing the positive evaluations of the instructors' professional satisfaction and work engagement. Although turnover intention is statistically significant, it works more as a weak degrading influence. Although the control and supervision of workloads are still essential parts of organizational management, the findings of our study show that merely reducing job demands is not enough to obtain excellent organizational efficiency (Lv et al., 2022).

Although this research possesses some theoretical and practical value, some aspects should be considered in future studies. The cross-sectional design used in our investigation may affect causal inference (Savitz & Wellenius, 2023). Though the dual-pathway model proposed in this paper is derived from the extended SOR framework and verified by some empirical data, the order of workload, person-job fit, internal states, and organizational performance cannot be determined clearly. In the future, longitudinal studies should be carried out to observe the dynamic changes of resource-depleting and resource-enabling processes, thus improving the reliability of causal inference. Higher vocational colleges in Guizhou Province, China are now experiencing a special period of institutional reform. Although this characteristic endows the study with high contextual value, it also restricts its application. Vocational education systems in other provinces of China and in other countries have different distributions of resources, positions for teachers, and so on (Po & Yunbo, 2017). Future research should therefore extend this model to other Chinese provinces and international vocational education systems, and comparative studies should be conducted, especially in environments with different institutional logics regarding industrial-educational integration and performance accountability.

6. Conclusion

This study extends the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory to the institutional change of Chinese higher vocational education during the "Double High Plan." A dual-pathway mechanism model for organizational effectiveness is established and empirically verified. By dividing the depleting organizational stimuli (workload) from the enabling stimuli (person-job fit) theoretically, this work demonstrates the asymmetrical internal mechanisms induced by different working environments and their effects on organizational outcomes in various ways. The results show that job satisfaction and turnover intention are not independent factors but form a dynamic and interrelated internal system, in which positive evaluations can restrain the increase in turnover intention.

These findings have an important effect on theoretical research. By clearly distinguishing the differences between resource-depleting and resource-enabling stimuli, this research expands the SOR framework. It not only classifies organizational stimuli into two different categories but also demonstrates the non-linear and asymmetric impacts on performance caused by the coexistence of opposite forces in the same institutional background. From the practical viewpoint, the results imply that the administrators and policymakers of higher vocational colleges ought to adopt a dual strategy. The resource-enabling conditions can be achieved by means of establishing person-job fit systems in the recruitment procedures of instructors and developing professional training programs corresponding to the changing requirements of the "Double High Plan". Flexible supporting structures meet the multi-dimensional career needs of the teachers. Therefore, it is more effective to cultivate motivational resources systematically through enhancing person-job fit, which can contribute to the continuous enhancement of organizational performance in vocational education. This change in strategic focus has significant importance for improving both the instructors' welfare and the organizational effectiveness under the current educational reform.

7. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study focused on two key internal states: job satisfaction and turnover intention, which were used as intervening variables. However, other internal states that might have a great influence, such as professional engagement, affective commitment, and sense of responsibility for students' development, may also have important effects on the relationship between resource-depleting and resource-enabling stimuli and organizational performance. Moreover, this study did not investigate the moderating factors. Individual resources like adaptability and occupational self-efficacy, and organizational resources such as leadership support and professional development opportunities, may either decrease the negative influence of workload or increase the positive effect of person-job fit. A better comprehension of the conditions and groups where the dual-pathway processes are most intense can be obtained through further research on these moderating factors.

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Appendix

Table1. Demographic Characteristics of The Sample

Sample Characteristics		Frequency
Gender	Male	212
	Female	245
Age	18-25 years old	13
	25-35 years old	228
	35-45 years old	157
	45-55 years old	57
	Above 55 years old	2
	less than 1 year	17
	1-5 years	138
Work Experience (Years)	5-10 years	143
	10-20 years	105
	20 years or more	54
	Below bachelor's degree	19
Education Background	Bachelor's degree	159
	Master's degree	276
	Doctoral degree	3
	Unrated	71
Academic title	Assistant Instructor	79
	Lecturer	198
	Associate Professor	98
	Professor	1
	Other	10

Author Statements

Author(s) declared the statement below:

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Author Contributions

Conceptualization: Wenyan Ma, Khunanan Sukpasjaroen, Aroonroj Boonkrong, Rerkchai Fooprateepsiri

Methodology: Wenyan Ma, Khunanan Sukpasjaroen, Aroonroj Boonkrong, Rerkchai Fooprateepsiri

Formal analysis: Wenyan Ma, Khunanan Sukpasjaroen

Investigation: Wenyan Ma

Writing - original draft: Wenyan Ma

Writing - review & editing: Wenyan Ma, Khunanan Sukpasjaroen, Aroonroj Boonkrong, Rerkchai Fooprateepsiri

Supervision: Wenyan Ma, Khunanan Sukpasjaroen, Aroonroj Boonkrong, Rerkchai Fooprateepsiri

Consent for Publication

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Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Ethics Approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

The conceptualization of the study, literature review, research design, methodology, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the findings were jointly undertaken by the authors. Generative artificial intelligence tools were used only after the manuscript had been completed, primarily for limited language editing and grammatical refinement. The authors assume full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the manuscript.

Supplementary Materials

No supplementary materials are available.

Journal Information

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