Transformational Leadership, AI Assistance, and Teachers'Organizational Commitment: Evidence from China's Primary Education Reform

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Abstract

Under China's "double reduction" policy (reducing academic burden and workload), while the goal of education reform is to alleviate students' academic burden, the implementation of this policy has led to greater work pressure and professional distress for primary school teachers, particularly in terms of workload, emotional stress, and professional commitment. The increasing prevalence of teacher burnout and declining organizational commitment not only affects the quality of education but also has profound implications for teachers' career development and the sustainable development of schools. This study aims to explore the relationship between transformational leadership, AI-assisted instruction, and teacher burnout and organizational commitment. The theoretical framework integrates Meyer and Allen's three-dimensional organizational commitment model with Bass's transformational leadership theory, and employs a qualitative research method primarily based on interviews to systematically analyze teachers' psychological states and work behaviors. The results show that transformational leadership significantly alleviates teacher burnout and effectively enhances their organizational commitment to the school; simultaneously, AI-assisted instruction tools also play a positive role in reducing teachers' workload, improving teaching efficiency, and promoting teachers' emotional well-being. This research not only provides education administrators with strategies for improving teacher well-being amidst policy changes but also offers new practical pathways for the sustainable development of schools.

Introduction

In the 21st-century education system, teachers not only bear the responsibility of imparting knowledge but also shoulder the important task of shaping students' morality, attitudes, and values. However, with the rapid changes in the social and educational environment, the professional challenges faced by teachers are becoming increasingly complex. Teachers not only need to effectively manage classroom time and develop scientific teaching strategies but also need to consider students' mental health and the cultivation of behavioral norms (Mansor et al., 2021). At the same time, school administration bears a significant responsibility in maintaining teachers' organizational commitment and motivating their participation in educational activities. Teachers' professional engagement depends not only on work autonomy, task diversity, and communication efficiency but is also closely related to leadership style, in-service training, and organizational support (Ma, 2022). Against this backdrop, changes in education policy have had a profound impact on teachers' professional behavior and mental well-being.

In 2021, the Chinese government implemented the "Double Reduction" policy, which aims to reduce the burden of homework and after-school tutoring on students in compulsory education. This policy seeks to alleviate academic pressure on students while promoting educational equity and holistic education. However, research and field surveys indicate that the policy has not significantly reduced teachers' workload; in fact, it has shifted some of the educational pressure onto teachers (People's Daily, 2021). For example, frontline primary and secondary school teachers must strictly control homework time and design personalized assignments based on student differences, increasing their lesson preparation and teaching burden. Meanwhile, some private school teachers' salaries are linked to student performance; under the "Double Reduction" policy, the reduction in after-school tutoring leads to income fluctuations, further increasing teachers' professional stress.

Teacher stress stems not only from heavy teaching loads but also from managing student behavior, communicating with parents, and uncertainty about career development. Research shows that teachers' work engagement and organizational commitment are closely related to their mental health, job satisfaction, and career stability (Mansor et al., 2021; Ma, 2022). Under the "double reduction" policy (reducing students' homework and off-campus tutoring), teachers must balance their professional lives and mental health while ensuring the quality of student learning. Statistics from the Ministry of Education show that although living allowance policies for teachers in rural areas of central and western China have been implemented, the overall workload of teachers remains high, especially for homeroom teachers and rural teachers, whose increased after-school services directly lead to longer working hours (Ministry of Education of the PRC, 2024).

School leadership plays a crucial role in alleviating teacher stress and enhancing organizational commitment. Transformational leadership, through motivation, coaching, and personalized care, can enhance teachers' professional identity and engagement (Bass, 1985). Meanwhile, the application of artificial intelligence (AI) technology in education is also considered an effective intervention. For example, AI teaching assistants can reduce teachers'

workload in curriculum design, homework grading, and personalized instruction, thereby reducing burnout (Hashem et al., 2024; Nain et al., 2024). The Guangdong Science Center's "museum-school integration" science education project fully leverages resource integration and innovative education, providing teachers with rich teaching and research support, while also demonstrating the auxiliary value of science and technology resources in educational reform (Ministry of Education of the PRC, 2024).

In conclusion, the issues of professional stress, organizational commitment, and turnover intention faced by teachers under the "double reduction" policy are important topics in current educational research. Exploring the role of transformational leadership and AI technology in alleviating teachers' workload and enhancing their professional engagement can provide policy and practical references for education administrators. Furthermore, this study aims to provide a theoretical basis for the sustainable development of primary education and help schools build a more efficient and healthy educational ecosystem. Subsequent chapters of this paper will sequentially introduce the literature review, research methods, empirical analysis results, and policy recommendations, striving to comprehensively elucidate the relationship mechanism between teacher burnout and organizational commitment under the "double reduction" policy.

Literature Review
Three Elements of Organizational Commitment Commitment Model
Organizational commitment refers to employees' psychological identification with and emotional investment in an organization, and is an important theoretical framework for understanding employee work behavior, career engagement, and turnover intention. Meyer and Allen (1991) proposed a three-element organizational commitment model, dividing organizational commitment into three dimensions: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. They emphasized that employees' commitment to the organization not only affects their retention decisions but also their work attitudes and behavioral performance (Meyer et al., 1991; Robbins et al., 2013). Related research shows that teachers' career engagement and organizational commitment are closely related to their mental health, job satisfaction, and job stability (Gajić et al., 2021). Therefore, the three-element model provides a theoretical basis for understanding teachers' professional behavior under the "double reduction" policy.

Affective commitment refers to the psychological commitment employees make based on their identification with organizational goals and values, and their desire to maintain their membership in the organization. It reflects employees' motivation to "stay," and its core lies in the emotional bond between employees and the organization (Meyer et al., 1991). Research has found that affective commitment is influenced by positive work experiences, organizational support, and leadership behavior, and is positively correlated with employee job satisfaction and proactive behavior (Ren et al., 2023). In addition, affective commitment has certain moral connotations, reflecting employees' sense of responsibility and fairness within the organization (Turiel, 1983). Continuing commitment reflects employees' willingness to stay when weighing the costs and benefits of leaving, emphasizing their motivation to "stay." Its formation is influenced by work pressure, emotional management skills, and work-life balance support (Chigeda et al., 2022), and is an important factor in understanding teachers' retention decisions under high workloads (Meyer et al., 1991).

Normative commitment stems from employees' moral obligations or social responsibilities. Employees remain because they feel the organization is investing in them or out of loyalty, reflecting a "should stay" psychological orientation (Ribeiro et al., 2022). These three dimensions of commitment do not exist independently but can simultaneously affect the same employee. Employees may maintain commitment to the organization simultaneously due to emotional identification, cost considerations, and moral responsibility (Ribeiro et al., 2022). Furthermore, organizational commitment and commitment to leadership interact: employees' trust and support for leadership can enhance organizational commitment, while high levels of organizational commitment also strengthen employees' identification with leadership (Gajić et al., 2021). Understanding the formation mechanism of these three elements of commitment helps school administrators design effective incentive strategies, reduce teacher burnout, and improve overall organizational effectiveness.

Transformational Leadership
Transformational leadership is a process-based leadership approach that empowers employees by motivating them to make extra efforts for the benefit of the organization, transcending the economic or social exchange relationship between leaders and followers (Bass, 1985). This leadership style emphasizes fostering collective optimism, stimulating team effectiveness, and inspiring employees to exceed their own capabilities to achieve organizational goals and vision (Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership theory identifies four core dimensions: idealized influence, motivational drive, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration care, which are considered prerequisites for employee empowerment and the development of creativity (Boamah, 2022). Leaders who motivate subordinates through clear vision communication and by building trust and respect, sacrificing personal interests for team progress, embody the core spirit of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985).

Literature review indicates that transformational leadership can motivate followers to commit to the organization's vision and goals, foster innovation through challenging tasks, and develop subordinates' capabilities through coaching and mentoring (Harsoyo, 2022). Its core components include idealized influence, inspiring motivation, intellectual stimulation, and personalized consideration. Research has also found that transformational leadership is significantly effective in enhancing employee creativity, overcoming stress and crises, implementing change, and developing potential leaders (Harsoyo, 2022). However, transformational leadership theory also faces criticism, such as its insufficient consideration of cultural differences and organizational adaptation (Harsoyo, 2022).

In recent years, with the development of globalization and digitalization, school leaders face higher demands, requiring them to create adaptive and inclusive learning environments. Empirical research shows that transformational leadership can improve school atmosphere, enhance teacher competence and student engagement, and positively impact teacher job satisfaction and performance (Warsi et al., 2025). Furthermore, in crisis situations, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, the combination of transformational leadership and technological capabilities can improve the job satisfaction and remote work attitudes of informal education coordinators, emphasizing the importance of adaptive leadership and digital capabilities in maintaining educational equity and resilience (Masry-Herzallah et al.,

2025). These findings provide important evidence for understanding the practical application of transformational leadership in primary schools and educational organizations.

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming increasingly prevalent in modern society, playing a significant role in marketing, design, entertainment, and higher education. Generative AI, in particular, has garnered widespread attention in the education sector. Educators generally believe that transparency is crucial when using AI and hope to interact with students more effectively through these tools. As technology advances, the quality and accuracy of generative AI outputs continue to improve, and its impact on educational practices is becoming increasingly significant (Lee et al., 2024).

Research shows that AI-generated chatbots, such as ChatGPT, can serve as teaching assistants for secondary school teachers, reducing workload and preventing burnout. Curriculum planning and content development are major contributors to teacher burnout. Through customized query testing, the study found that ChatGPT has potential in personalized curriculum design and content development, effectively supporting teachers in completing demanding tasks and thus alleviating work stress (Hashem et al., 2024). Increased teacher workload does not stem from core teaching responsibilities, but rather from the burden of additional tasks such as technology management, personalized student learning planning, and assessment.

Globally, the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on teacher well-being is gaining increasing attention. Research indicates that AI can help teachers manage workloads, promote professional development, and provide emotional support. In the context of secondary education in India, AI applications have shown the potential to reduce administrative workloads, improve student performance, and enhance teacher job satisfaction (Nain et al., 2024). Furthermore, for special education teachers, AI can assist in completing numerous non-teaching tasks, such as collaboration, adapting reading materials, and monitoring progress, thereby freeing up teaching time and improving educational efficiency (Goldman et al., 2024).

In summary, existing research indicates that teacher burnout is influenced by multiple factors, including workload, leadership style, and technological support. The three dimensions of organizational commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment) are closely related to teachers' engagement with schools (Meyer et al., 1998; Robbins et al., 2013; Gajić et al., 2021), while transformational leadership can enhance teachers' work motivation and creativity through motivation, mentoring, and intellectual stimulation (Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Boamah, 2022; Warsi et al., 2025). Furthermore, artificial intelligence, especially generative AI tools, shows potential in reducing teacher workload, supporting curriculum development, and preventing burnout (Hashem et al., 2024; Nain et al., 2024; Goldman et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2024). However, existing literature on the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment among primary school teachers under the "double reduction" policy, combined with leadership and artificial intelligence support, remains relatively limited.

To fill this research gap, this study will interview primary school teachers in Foshan, Guangdong Province. Guangdong was chosen because the province has actively promoted the balanced development of science education resources and innovation in extracurricular education during the implementation of the "double reduction" policy, achieving significant results (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2024). Foshan, as an economically developed city in Guangdong with abundant educational resources, is representative and conducive to exploring the realities of teacher burnout, organizational commitment, and the application of artificial intelligence in the context of policy implementation.

Research Methods

To fill a research gap, this study will use semi-structured interviews to explore the current state of teacher burnout, organizational commitment, and the application of artificial intelligence in primary schools in Foshan, Guangdong Province, under the "Double Reduction" policy. Guangdong was chosen because the province has actively promoted the balanced development of science education resources and innovation in extracurricular education during the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy, achieving significant results (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2024). Foshan, as an economically developed city with abundant educational resources in Guangdong, is highly representative and can provide valuable empirical data for exploring the reality of teacher burnout and the application of artificial intelligence under the policy implementation.

This study interviewed primary school teachers and principals in Foshan. Interview questions focused on teachers' workload, leadership styles, the use of AI tools, and the effectiveness of the "double reduction" policy. The interview questions were designed to help us gain a deeper understanding of changes in teachers' workload after the implementation of the "double reduction" policy, the application of transformational leadership in schools and its impact on teacher commitment, and the effectiveness of AI-assisted tools in supporting teacher instruction. The specific content of the interview questions is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Question Design for Interviews with Primary School Teachers and Principals

Theme	Interview Questions (Teachers)	Interview Questions (Principal)
Teacher workload	1. Has your workload changed since the "double reduction" policy was implemented? What specific changes have occurred?	1. Have you observed any changes in teachers' workload? What measures has the school taken to reduce teachers' workload?
	2. How do you think these changes have affected your job burnout?	2. Does the school administration provide sufficient support for teachers to cope with work stress? Do you think this support is effective?
Leadership Perception	1. What is your opinion on the leadership style of the school leaders? Has it affected your work?	1. In your opinion, what impact does the school's leadership style have on teachers' work and professional commitment?
	2. How does transformational leadership affect your career commitment and job satisfaction?	2. What role do you think transformational leadership plays in implementing the "double reduction" policy? Does it help teachers better adapt to change?
Artificial intelligence applications	1. Have you ever used artificial intelligence tools (such as ChatGPT) to assist in teaching? If so, could you share your specific experience?	1. Is the school promoting the application of artificial intelligence tools? Has it provided relevant training and support for teachers?
	2. Do you think artificial intelligence tools can effectively reduce your workload and improve teaching effectiveness?	2. What are your views on the application of artificial intelligence in education? Do you believe it can help schools reduce the workload of teachers?
Policy Experience	1. Do you think the "double reduction" policy has alleviated your work pressure? In what specific ways?	1. How do you evaluate the impact of the "double reduction" policy on teachers' workload? What do you think of the policy's effectiveness?
	2. What are your thoughts on the school's support during the implementation of the "double reduction" policy?	2. How do you think the school can further optimize the implementation of the "double reduction" policy to better support teachers' work and development?
Overall impact	1. How do you think the implementation of the "double reduction" policy has affected your job burnout?	1. Under the "double reduction" policy, how do you think schools can help teachers reduce burnout and enhance their professional commitment?
	2. Do you feel that the policy changes have led to greater cooperation and support among colleagues?	2. Do you believe that collaboration among teachers has a positive impact on alleviating occupational stress? How does the school promote this collaboration?

This study, through interviews with primary school teachers in Foshan, aims to answer the following core questions: Under the "double reduction" policy (reducing the number of teachers and reducing the number of teachers' workload), how do transformational leadership and AI-assisted tools affect primary school teachers' burnout and organizational commitment levels? The interview results will help us better understand the formation mechanisms of teacher work stress and provide practical references for school administrators and policymakers to optimize teacher support systems and the allocation of teaching resources, thereby improving teacher job satisfaction and career development. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All participants provided informed consent and ethical guidelines were observed.

The Dilemmas and Challenges of Teachers under the Double Reduction Policy
This study, through interviews with primary school teachers and principals in Foshan, explored the current state of teacher burnout, organizational commitment, and the application of artificial intelligence under the "double reduction" policy. The interview results revealed some key issues faced by teachers; the following are five core questions raised during the interviews.

Increased Workload for Teachers
Although the "double reduction" policy was initially intended to alleviate students' extracurricular burden, many teachers have reported that their workload has not significantly decreased since its implementation. Many teachers have indicated that while extracurricular tutoring has decreased, their workload in school administration, organizing extracurricular activities, and lesson preparation has increased. Some teachers also stated that schools have raised their standards for teaching quality, requiring them to dedicate more time to pre-class preparation and post-class assessment.

For example, Teacher A mentioned, "After the 'double reduction' policy was implemented, my teaching workload did not decrease. On the contrary, due to the control of extracurricular activities and homework, more time was spent on lesson preparation, writing teaching plans, and participating in school training. I feel that my workload has increased." Principal B stated, "The school has not added any new tasks, but the requirements for teaching quality have become higher, and teachers are under more pressure in the classroom. The school also needs more administrative support and refined management."

The Problem of Teacher Burnout is Intensifying
The interview results also indicate that, despite the "double reduction" policy, teacher burnout has not been effectively alleviated; in fact, it has increased. Many teachers reported that although the policy aims to reduce students' burdens, the increased workload and responsibilities of teachers have not alleviated their burnout. Some teachers mentioned that during the policy implementation process, reforms in teaching content and changes in organizational management have placed constant pressure on teachers to adapt, leading to physical and mental exhaustion.

Teacher C said, "I feel that my job burnout is getting worse. Although the students' burden has been reduced, my working hours have become longer, especially with the addition of more teaching management work." Principal D also mentioned, "The original intention of

the 'double reduction' was to reduce the burden on students and teachers, but it did not fundamentally solve the teachers' work pressure. On the contrary, some teachers' workload has increased, especially in terms of grading homework and organizing extracurricular activities."

Teachers' Perceptions of Leadership Styles and their Support Needs

The interviews also revealed teachers' perceptions of school leadership styles and their need for leadership support. Teachers generally believed that the support and leadership style of school leaders have a significant impact on their job satisfaction, professional commitment, and burnout. In particular, the application of transformational leadership provides teachers with more motivation and support, helping them cope with the stress brought about by policy changes. Teacher E stated, "Our principal is very supportive of us; she often encourages us to participate in educational innovation and try new tools. Without her support, I might have long since become overwhelmed by work pressure." Meanwhile, Principal F pointed out, "I believe transformational leadership is crucial for teachers' professional commitment. I communicate with teachers regularly, pay attention to their work status, and try my best to reduce their anxiety and burnout."

The Application of Artificial Intelligence Tools has Limited Effectiveness

Although some teachers have tried using artificial intelligence tools (such as ChatGPT) to assist in lesson preparation and classroom interaction in their daily teaching, many teachers interviewed indicated that the actual application of these tools has not met expectations. Teachers generally reported that while these tools can save time in some aspects, the lack of systematic training and technical support leads many teachers to face technical obstacles in practical application, resulting in limited effectiveness.

For example, teacher G mentioned, "I tried using AI tools to assist in lesson preparation, but in actual use, the suggestions given by the tools are not always fully adapted to the classroom situation. Sometimes, it actually wastes more time adjusting the content." Principal H also stated, "Our school is also promoting the application of AI tools, but teachers generally report that there is not enough training and technical support, and the use of the tools has not helped them significantly reduce their workload."

The Impact of the Double Reduction Policy on Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Although the "double reduction" policy was initially intended to alleviate teachers' workload, some teachers interviewed pointed out that the policy's implementation has not truly achieved the expected reduction effect. On the contrary, teachers generally reported that due to the constant changes in the policy and issues with the details of its implementation, their job satisfaction has not significantly improved; instead, they face more adaptation challenges. Many teachers felt that the lack of clarity in the policy details led to significant difficulties in implementation and dissatisfaction.

Teacher I stated, "Everyone was very excited when the 'double reduction' policy started, but looking back now, many policy details are unclear, and our workload as teachers hasn't actually decreased. The school is also facing a lot of pressure, and we feel the policy's effect is not as expected." Principal J added, "There are many challenges in implementing the policy. Although we have tried our best to reduce students' extracurricular burden, the management

requirements for teachers have increased. We also need more support to implement these policies."

Solutions and Optimization Suggestions for Addressing the Challenges of Implementing the "Double Reduction" Policy

Based on the key issues identified in Chapter 4 and the results of interviews and discussions of relevant literature, this study proposes the following five solutions to help schools in Foshan and other similar areas optimize the implementation of the "double reduction" policy, alleviate teacher burnout, and improve teachers' job satisfaction and professional commitment.

Rationally Allocate Teachers' Work Tasks

Despite the "double reduction" policy (reducing administrative and teaching workloads), teachers' workloads have not significantly decreased. In fact, many teachers feel even more stressed due to increased administrative tasks and curriculum organization. Therefore, it is crucial to rationally allocate teachers' workloads, simplify administrative affairs, and optimize the arrangement of school activities. Schools should reduce teachers' non-teaching burdens by optimizing administrative processes, increasing administrative support staff, and rationally allocating teaching and non-teaching tasks, helping them focus more on their core teaching work. Furthermore, schools should reduce unnecessary meetings and administrative assessments, allowing teachers more time and energy for classroom teaching and student tutoring. This approach can effectively reduce teachers' workload and improve their work efficiency and teaching quality.

Provide Occupational Burnout Intervention and Psychological Support

In response to the widespread issue of burnout among teachers, schools should establish a systematic intervention mechanism and provide mental health support. Teacher burnout often stems from the long-term accumulation of work stress; therefore, schools should provide teachers with regular psychological counseling and stress management courses to help them regulate their emotions and improve their work performance. Regular mental health lectures and stress relief training courses should be held to help teachers recognize and manage their stress, reducing physical and mental health problems caused by work pressure. Simultaneously, schools should establish support networks among teachers, encouraging the exchange of experiences and emotional support to enhance a sense of belonging and reduce individual burnout.

Promoting the Continuous Application of Transformational Leadership

Interview results indicate that teachers' perceived support from school leaders significantly impacts their work attitudes and professional commitment. To further improve teacher job satisfaction, school leaders should continuously apply transformational leadership, enhancing communication and support with teachers. School leaders not only need to provide clear policy guidance but also actively listen to teachers' opinions and feedback, adjusting management strategies promptly. School leaders can understand teachers' needs through regular staff forums and individual conversations, encouraging teachers to pursue innovation in teaching and providing corresponding career development support. In this way, school leaders can effectively enhance teachers' work motivation and professional commitment, thereby improving teacher job satisfaction.

Provide System Training and Technical Support for Artificial Intelligence Tools

While AI tools hold great potential in education, teachers face numerous difficulties in applying them due to a lack of effective training and technical support. Therefore, schools should provide teachers with systematic training on AI tools to help them master their usage methods and skills. Training should include basic operation of AI tools, their integration with instructional design, and how to evaluate and adjust the teaching effectiveness of these tools. Furthermore, schools should establish technical support teams specifically to help teachers resolve technical difficulties encountered when using AI tools and to provide timely technical updates and maintenance support. By improving teachers' proficiency and confidence in AI tools, they can utilize technology more efficiently to reduce their workload, thereby enhancing teaching effectiveness.

Optimizing the Implementation Details of the "Double Reduction" Policy

To better alleviate teachers' workload, education authorities and schools should further clarify the specific implementation details of the "double reduction" policy to ensure its effective implementation. First, schools need to strengthen the interpretation and implementation of the "double reduction" policy to ensure teachers have a consistent understanding and can adapt quickly. Second, school management should adjust the policy implementation details promptly based on teacher feedback, avoiding a "one-size-fits-all" approach. Through flexible implementation and specific operational guidelines, schools can help teachers better adapt to the policy, thereby improving their job satisfaction and professional commitment.

Conclusions

This study, through interviews with primary school teachers and principals in Foshan, explored the current state of teacher burnout, organizational commitment, and the application of artificial intelligence tools under the "double reduction" policy. The study found that despite the policy's aim to alleviate teachers' workload, burnout remains a prominent issue due to increased teaching and administrative tasks within schools. Furthermore, teachers' perceived support from school leaders and the application of transformational leadership have significant impacts on professional commitment and job satisfaction. While artificial intelligence tools hold great potential, the lack of systematic training and technical support limits their effectiveness.

To address these issues, this study proposes five strategies: rationally allocating teachers' workloads, providing burnout intervention and psychological support, continuously promoting transformational leadership, strengthening training and technical support for artificial intelligence tools, and optimizing the implementation details of the "double reduction" policy. These measures will help alleviate teachers' burdens, improve job satisfaction and professional commitment, thereby promoting the improvement of education quality.

This study offers practical insights into the challenges faced by teachers under the "double reduction" policy, but limitations in the sample's geographical scope and the depth of interviews remain constraints. Future research could expand the sample size to further explore policy practices and teacher experiences in schools across different regions, providing a more comprehensive reference for educational management and policy optimization.

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