Examining the Interplay between Trait Mindfulness and Thriving at Work among Teachers in Western China: The Mediating Role of General Self-Efficacy

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the nuanced relationship between trait mindfulness and thriving at work among educators in Western China, emphasizing the mediating role of general self-efficacy. Employing a sample of 378 primary and secondary school teachers, this research utilizes the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ), Thriving at Work Scale (TWS), and the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) to conduct a thorough investigation. The findings indicate a significant positive correlation between trait mindfulness and thriving at work, between trait mindfulness and general self-efficacy, and between general self-efficacy and thriving at work. Additionally, trait mindfulness was found to have a positive predictive effect on both thriving at work and general self-efficacy, with general self-efficacy also showing a positive predictive effect on thriving at work. Importantly, general self-efficacy was identified as playing a partial mediating role in the relationship between trait mindfulness and thriving at work. These results underscore the importance of cultivating mindfulness and self-efficacy among teachers to enhance their enthusiasm for work, suggesting potential pathways for professional development and well-being in the educational sector.

1. Introduction

The advent of technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and big data has catalyzed a transformative shift towards the "Internet + education" paradigm, particularly accentuating the need for enhanced professional development among educators in Western China. The strategic plan "China's Education Modernization 2035" highlights the crucial need for cultivating "high-quality, professional, innovative teachers" as a cornerstone for accelerating educational modernization. In this rapidly evolving landscape, educators are required to navigate new currents of technological change while ensuring their pedagogical approaches remain relevant. The challenge is compounded by the dual-reduction policy, which aims to alleviate student workload but has inadvertently extended teachers' working hours and intensified their work-related stress. Consequently, fostering a high level of work vitali-

ty and thriving at work for learning becomes essential for educators to effectively meet these evolving professional demands. Investigating teachers' thriving at work through the prism of positive psychology emerges as a pivotal avenue for offering novel insights and strategies for their professional growth.

Sonenshein et al. (2005) conceptualize thriving at work as a "subjective positive psychological state," characterized by vitality and an ongoing engagement with learning within the work environment [1]. This state is multifaceted, comprising vitality—a subjective sense of energy and zest in one's work—and learning—the acquisition and application of new knowledge and skills. Notably, thriving at work plays a critical role in mitigating job burnout and promoting health, while also positively correlating with initiatives towards career development [2-4]. However, existing research has predominantly focused on factors such as job stress, leadership styles, and organizational characteristics, with less attention given to the impact of personal traits like mindfulness on thriving at work.

Trait Mindfulness, defined as the capacity to maintain a focused awareness on the present moment, varies among individuals but can be cultivated through practice [5]. According to the mindfulness re-perception model, mindfulness enables individuals to perceive experiences more objectively, thereby facilitating adaptive responses to challenges [6]. This capacity to mitigate stress and refocus attention on current tasks suggests that trait mindfulness could significantly enhance educators' ability to manage stress and navigate professional challenges [7]. Prior research supports the notion that mindfulness positively influences innovation and work thriving [8].

Furthermore, general self-efficacy, or the belief in one's ability to succeed in various settings, has been shown to have a significant impact on behavior and correlates positively with thriving at work [9-10]. Mindfulness training has been demonstrated to elevate self-efficacy, thereby enhancing commitment and energy towards work [11].

In light of the gaps in current literature, this study seeks to bridge the divide by examining the relationship between trait mindfulness and thriving at work among primary and secondary school teachers through the lens of positive psychology. Additionally, it aims to unravel the mediating role of general self-efficacy in this relationship. By doing so, the study endeavors to lay a foundational framework for educators to maintain their enthusiasm for work and bolster their professional competencies.

2. Participants and Measures

2.1 Participants

This study utilized a convenience sampling strategy to collect data from 378 primary and secondary school teachers in Gansu Province, China. Out of these, 311 questionnaires were deemed valid, resulting in an effec-

tive response rate of 80.77%. The participant demographic consisted of 50 male teachers (16.1%) and 261 female teachers (83.9%). The distribution of teachers across different grade levels was as follows: 129 (41.5%) taught grades 1-3, 159 (51.13%) taught grades 4-6, and 23 (7.4%) were from middle and high schools. In terms of geographic location, 126 teachers (40.5%) were from townships, while 185 (59.5%) were from urban areas.

2.2 Measures

2.2.1 Thriving at work

Thriving at Work Scale (TWS), developed by Porath et al., measures two aspects: learning and vitality. It employs a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree") [12]. The reliability of this scale, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha, was 0.829 in the current study.

2.2.2 General Self-Efficacy Assessment

Our study utilized the Chinese adaptation of the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES), which was translated into Chinese by Wang Caikang and colleagues in 2001 [9]. This instrument evaluates three dimensions of self-efficacy: level, intensity, and breadth, using a 7-point Likert scale from 1 ("totally disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree") [13]. The scale's reliability, measured by Cronbach's alpha, was 0.929 [13].

2.2.3 Trait Mindfulness

Assessment of trait mindfulness was conducted using the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ), comprising 39 items rated on a 5-point scale from 1 ("completely inconsistent") to 5 ("completely consistent"). The facets evaluated include observation, description, aware actions, non-judgmental inner experience, and non-reactivity. The internal consistency coefficients for these facets within the Chinese sample were 0.746 (observation), 0.843 (description), 0.794 (aware actions, non-judgmental inner experience), and 0.659 (non-reactivity) [14].

2.3 Data Processing

Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 24.0. The process began with a test for common method variance, followed by descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. Subsequently, a simple mediation model was tested to examine the relationships among the variables.

3. Results

3.1 Common Method Deviation Test

To evaluate the potential for common method bias, we applied the Harman single-factor test across all questionnaire items. Analysis of the 59 items resulted in the

extraction of 11 distinct factors, each with eigenvalues exceeding 1. Notably, the first factor accounted for 21.61% of the total variance, which is below the threshold of 40% commonly used to indicate significant methodological bias. Consequently, this analysis suggests that the data are not significantly affected by common method bias.

3.2 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis of Each Variable

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among trait mindfulness, general self-efficacy, and thriving at work. The results indicated significant positive correlations across these variables. Specifically, trait mindfulness was positively correlated with thriving at work and general self-efficacy. Similarly, general self-efficacy showed a positive correlation with thriving at work (see Table 1 for detailed statistics).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis of each variable (r)

Variables	M±SD	1	2	3
1 Trait Mindfulness	126.28±11.11	1		
2 Thriving at work	38.16±5.91	0.492**	1	
3 The General Self-Efficacy	46.36±10.75	0.391**	0.530**	1

Note: **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$.

3.3 The Mediating Role of General Self-Efficacy in the Relationship between Trait Mindfulness and thriving at work

The influence of general self-efficacy as a mediator between trait mindfulness and thriving at work was assessed using Model 4 of the PROCESS macro for SPSS. Regression analysis indicated that trait mindfulness significantly predicts thriving at work ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < .001$) and also has a significant positive effect on general self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < .001$). When examining the combined predictive power of trait mindfulness and general self-efficacy on thriving at work, both variables exhibited significant positive effects: trait mindfulness ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < .001$) and general self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < .001$) (refer to Table 2 for comprehensive results).

Table 2: Regression analysis of the relationship between variables in the mediation model

Variables	Model 1 β	Model 1 t	Model 2 β	Model 2 t	Model 3 β	Model 3 t
Trait Mindfulness	0.26	9.95***	0.38	7.48***	0.18	6.89***
The General Self Efficacy					0.22	8.15
R²		0.24		0.15		0.38
F		98.95***		55.90*** 93.16***		

Note: **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$.

To further validate the mediating role of general self-efficacy, a bootstrap analysis was employed. This analysis revealed an indirect effect of general self-efficacy on the relationship between trait mindfulness and thriving at work, estimated at 0.18. The bootstrap standard error for this indirect effect was 0.03, and the 95% confidence interval [0.12, 0.23] did not include zero, indicating a significant mediating effect. This mediation accounts for approximately 30.77% of the total effect (0.26) on thriving at work (detailed findings are presented in Table 3 and Figure 1).

Table 3: Analysis of the mediating effect of general self-efficacy on trait mindfulness and thriving at work

	Effect Size	Standard Error	Bootstrap 95%CI Upper Bound	Bootstrap 95%CI Lower Bound	Proportion of Total Effect
Total Effect	0.26	0.03	0.21	0.31	
Direct Effect	0.18	0.03	0.13	0.23	
Indirect Effect	0.16	0.27	0.10	0.21	30.77%

Note: The bootstrap standard error, the lower limit of the bootstrap confidence interval (Boot CI Lower), and the upper limit of the bootstrap confidence interval (Boot CI Upper) refer to the standard error of the indirect effects, and the lower and upper limits of the 95% confidence interval estimated through the bias-corrected percentile bootstrap method, respectively. All values are rounded to two decimal places for precision.
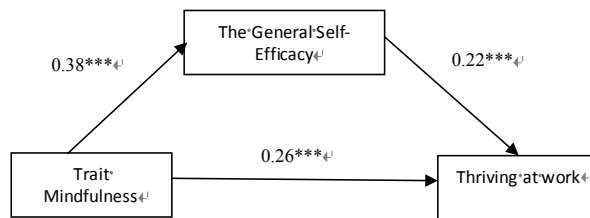

Figure 1. Mediating effect pathway of general self-efficacy

4. Discussion

The findings of this study underscore a significant positive correlation between trait mindfulness and thriving at work, echoing previous research that highlights the beneficial effects of mindfulness on work-related enthusiasm [8]. Individuals with high levels of trait mindfulness are characterized by sustained attention, increased curiosity, and an open attitude towards tasks, which positively influences both the learning and vitality dimensions of thriving at work. This relationship corroborates existing literature, reinforcing the notion that mindfulness can significantly impact work-related outcomes.

Additionally, our results reveal a substantial positive correlation between trait mindfulness and general self-efficacy. This is consistent with prior findings, suggesting that individuals with heightened mindfulness are more receptive and capable of stable attention, superior self-regulation, and non-judgmental acceptance [11]. These attributes contribute to an enhanced sense of self-efficacy, further supporting the interconnectedness between mindfulness and an individual's belief in their capabilities.

Moreover, a robust positive correlation between general self-efficacy and thriving at work was observed. This supports the idea that a strong subjective belief in one's own capabilities, encapsulated in the notion of "I can do it," fosters not only vitality and learning but also the application of new skills in navigating daily work challenges. The synergy between general self-efficacy and thriving at work highlights the pivotal role of self-belief in enhancing job-related outcomes.

Traditionally, research on teachers' well-being has predominantly focused on negative aspects such as job burnout. However, the application of positive psychology principles shifts this focus towards the cultivation of a vigorous work sense, offering a fresh perspective for teachers to navigate societal changes and bolster their professional stature. Our study's mediation analysis reinforces the direct positive impact of trait mindfulness on thriving at work and elucidates its indirect effect through the mediating role of general self-efficacy. This aligns with the integrated model of personal growth proposed by Spreitzer and Porath (2013), which underscores the importance of individual initiative and autonomy in fostering enthusiasm, adaptability, and personal health. The act of completing work tasks not only enhances feelings of competence or self-efficacy but also reinforces work enthusiasm, aligning with both theoretical expectations and previous research findings [15].

This investigation not only sheds light on the positive influence of trait mindfulness on general self-efficacy and, subsequently, on thriving at work but also highlights the critical mediating role of general self-efficacy. By alleviating the pressures faced by teachers, directing their attention to current tasks, reducing internal conflicts, and boosting confidence in handling events, trait mindfulness enhances the sense of work vitality.

In summary, our study contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics influencing thriving at work and offers practical insights for augmenting teachers' enthusiasm and professional development. On one hand, mindfulness, as a modifiable trait, can be fostered through targeted mindfulness training, thereby positively affecting teachers' sense of self-efficacy. On the other hand, educational institutions can bolster teachers' general self-efficacy through improved reward systems and supportive management practices, cultivating an environment conducive to exploration, learning, and resilience in the face of new challenges.

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