



# The Impact of Educational Beliefs on Work Engagement Among Private College Teachers in China: An Empirical Study

Yupeng Wang<sup>1</sup>, Yung-Cheng Hsieh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Chinese Graduate School, Panyapiwat Institute of Management, Nonthaburi, Thailand

<sup>2</sup>Zhejiang University, Zhejiang, China.

<sup>1</sup>E-mail: yupeng.w@gmail.com, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-2067-0677>

<sup>2</sup>E-mail: yunghsieh@gmail.com, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-1042-7443>

Received 21/02/2024

Revised 13/03/2024

Accepted 10/04/2024

## Abstract

**Background and Aim:** Despite the widespread acknowledgment of work engagement challenges among faculty, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the specific influence of educational beliefs on teacher engagement, particularly within private colleges in China. Thus, this study aims to explore the impact of educational management beliefs and work engagement among teachers in private colleges and universities.

**Materials and Methods:** Employing a questionnaire survey and interviews, this study investigates how teachers' beliefs and sense of teaching efficacy mediate their work engagement. Research tools include the "Survey on the Impact of Educational Beliefs on Work Engagement among Private College Teachers" and the "Interview Outline for Educational Beliefs of Private College Teachers," with SPSS 26.0 software and the Process plugin used for data analysis.

**Results:** Findings reveal a significant, positive correlation between teachers' educational beliefs, their sense of teaching efficacy, and their work engagement.

**Conclusion:** The study underscores the importance of nurturing positive educational beliefs and teaching efficacy to enhance work engagement among private college teachers, contributing to the advancement of higher education in China.

**Keywords:** Private Colleges; Educational Beliefs; Work Engagement; Teaching Efficacy

## Introduction

The escalating pressures and workloads faced by university faculty have become a focal point of concern in the global academic community, marking a significant challenge that transcends national boundaries. This phenomenon, characterized by diminishing work engagement among university teachers, has prompted a surge of scholarly attention, aiming to understand and address the root causes of this issue. Specifically, in the context of China, private college teachers confront pronounced professional pressures, compounded by often ineffective organizational support and a lack of efficient emotional coping strategies. These factors collectively exacerbate the issue, leading to a noticeable decline in work engagement, characterized by a growing disinterest and lack of enthusiasm towards their roles, and a diminished sense of achievement among educators. Such adverse conditions not only undermine the personal well-being of the faculty but also impede the educational development of students and the broader institutional growth.

Despite the widespread acknowledgment of work engagement challenges among faculty, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the specific influence of educational beliefs on teacher engagement, particularly within private colleges in China. Teachers base their teaching behaviors on their educational beliefs, which constitute a complex and evolving system (Wang, 2009). Existing studies have extensively explored the dimensions of "what to teach," "how to teach," and "why to teach," yet have largely overlooked the critical underpinning of teachers' internal landscapes — their educational beliefs. These beliefs, which significantly dictate teaching behaviors and are pivotal for teaching efficacy, offer a nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play in fostering teacher engagement (Guo, 2008).

This paper seeks to address this gap by focusing on the intricate relationship between educational beliefs and work engagement among private college teachers in China. By delineating how the prevailing educational beliefs within this cohort influence their engagement with work, the study aims to uncover potential pathways for mitigating professional burnout and enhancing institutional management. The



rationale behind this inquiry is grounded in the premise that a deeper comprehension of the interplay between educational beliefs and work engagement can provide critical insights into alleviating the challenges faced by teachers. Therefore, this study not only contributes to the broader discourse on teacher engagement but also provides a focused analysis of the pivotal role of educational beliefs in shaping the work dynamics of private college teachers in China.

## Objectives

1. To investigate the impact of private college teachers' educational beliefs on their work engagement.
2. To examine the mediating role of teaching efficacy between educational beliefs and work engagement, and to further explore the relationships and mechanisms among these three factors.

## Literature review

### 1. Educational Beliefs

Carolyn E. Bunting believes that educational beliefs represent a comprehensive educational view held by teachers, which influences their daily behavior. Sahin, Bullock, and Stables view educational beliefs as a collection of various opinions, attitudes, and ideas that teachers develop throughout their entire educational work experience (Guo, 2017).

Zhao (2004) asserts that the subject of educational beliefs is the teachers themselves, suggesting that educational beliefs are the thoughts, viewpoints, and assumptions about people, nature, society, and education and teaching that the teacher acknowledges and adheres to. Fang (2008) argues that the subject of educational beliefs is the educator, defining educational beliefs as a system of beliefs built upon the educator's understanding and profound insight into the education profession they are engaged in. Dong (2019) believes that the subject of educational beliefs is the educator, and defines educational beliefs as the educator's acknowledgment and firm belief in certain educational concepts, student perceptions, and teacher role perceptions.

Combining definitions from both domestic and international sources, although there is no consensus on the subject of educational beliefs, they all ultimately define beliefs as the thoughts, viewpoints, or concepts that the subject firmly believes in.

### 2. Work Engagement

Lodahl and Kejner were the first to introduce the concept of work engagement, defining it as the degree to which a person's work performance affects their self-esteem (complete self-image). Saleh & Hosek (1976) summarized that work engagement could be defined as comprising three components of the self: identity, homogeneity, and evaluativeness. External scholars, such as Kahn, defined work engagement as a series of positive behavioral performances by organizational members, that enhance individual work efficiency, including cognitive, emotional, and physical development dimensions.

Recent trends in work engagement research highlight the impact of digital transformation and remote work environments on employee engagement levels. Scholars such as Smith and Jones (2021) have found that technological advancements and the shift to virtual workspaces have both challenges and opportunities for fostering work engagement. Their research suggests that while remote work can enhance flexibility and work-life balance, it may also lead to feelings of isolation and disconnection, affecting overall engagement. From an interdisciplinary perspective, work engagement is increasingly studied in conjunction with psychological well-being and organizational culture. For instance, Zhang et al. (2022) have examined how psychological safety and organizational support mechanisms contribute to higher levels of work engagement among employees, indicating a strong correlation between a supportive work environment and employee engagement. Moreover, the application of work engagement in the field of education has seen innovative developments, with researchers exploring how educators' engagement impacts student outcomes and institutional effectiveness. Kelly and Singh (2020) have conducted a mixed-methods study incorporating both quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews with teachers, revealing that



educators' emotional and cognitive engagement significantly influences their teaching effectiveness and student engagement.

Drawing from previous research, this study defines the work engagement of private college teachers as the complete mental and emotional integration displayed in their job positions and the positive work-related emotions and feelings.

### 3. Teaching Efficacy

Self-efficacy theory is at the heart of Bandura's social cognitive theory. Bandura defines self-efficacy as an individual's confidence in their capability to organize and execute actions required to manage prospective situations, as well as the belief in succeeding. Teacher self-efficacy not only affects teachers' choices and understanding of work goals but is also closely related to teachers' work motivation, effort level, and emotional fluctuations (Hong & Pang, 2006). Teachers with different levels of self-efficacy show significant differences in class time management, classroom issues, problem subjects, and methods of feedback to students. As society progresses, education is increasingly not limited to the transfer of knowledge. Teachers' professional happiness comes from meeting higher levels of spiritual needs. Teachers' cognition of their self-status and career development opportunities in the organizational environment is restricted by external conditions. In particular, the leadership characteristics of school leaders directly affect teachers' self-perception and confidence when facing challenges.

Based on this, self-efficacy in this study refers to teachers' subjective perception of the impact of their teaching level, students' learning behaviors, and performance outcomes within a specific organizational atmosphere. It represents teachers' understanding and belief in their capabilities, serving as an essential foundation for observing teachers' teaching confidence and proactive initiative.

## Conceptual Framework

This study aims to dissect the influence of educational beliefs on work engagement among teachers in private colleges, with a particular emphasis on the mediating role of self-efficacy. To enrich the theoretical foundation of our research model, we draw upon the theory of reasoned action, conservation of resources theory, and self-efficacy theory, each contributing unique insights into the dynamics between educational beliefs, self-efficacy, and work engagement.

### 1. Theoretical Underpinnings:

(1) Theory of Reasoned Action. Posits that individual behavior is driven by behavioral intentions, where these intentions are a function of an individual's attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms. Within our model, this theory supports the notion that teachers' educational beliefs (attitudes toward the effectiveness of their teaching methods) influence their intended and actual levels of work engagement.

(2) Conservation of Resources Theory. Suggests that individuals strive to obtain, retain, and protect their resources. This theory explains how self-efficacy can act as a crucial personal resource that mediates the relationship between teachers' educational beliefs and their engagement at work, potentially leading to higher job satisfaction and reduced burnout.

(3) Self-Efficacy Theory, A core aspect of Bandura's social cognitive theory, underlines the belief in one's capabilities to execute actions required to manage prospective situations. It provides a framework for understanding how teachers' beliefs in their teaching capabilities (teaching efficacy) influence their engagement with their work.

### 2. Key Constructs Defined

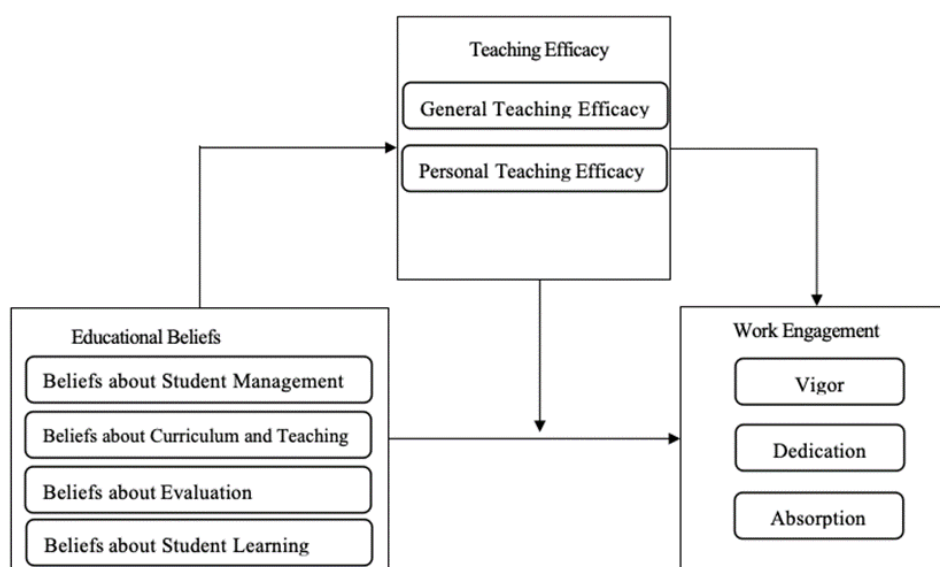
(1) Educational Beliefs are defined as teachers' convictions about the value and effectiveness of their teaching philosophies and methods.

(2) Self-efficacy refers to the teachers' belief in their capacity to execute teaching-related tasks successfully.

(3) Work Engagement is conceptualized as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.

The construction of the conceptual model is grounded in the hypothesis that teachers' educational beliefs directly influence their work engagement and do so indirectly through the mediating effect of self-efficacy. The positioning of self-efficacy as a mediator is informed by empirical evidence suggesting that individuals' beliefs in their professional capabilities significantly influence their engagement levels and overall job performance. The model posits educational beliefs as the independent variable, acknowledging the foundational role of teachers' philosophies in shaping their professional identity and behavior. Self-efficacy serves as the mediator, reflecting its pivotal role in translating beliefs into action, and work engagement is the dependent variable, representing the ultimate expression of teachers' professional dedication and vitality.

By providing a more nuanced explanation of the theories informing our model, precisely defining our key constructs, and elucidating the rationale behind our conceptual model's structure, we aim to offer a robust theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding how educational beliefs impact work engagement among private college teachers. The research framework of this study is illustrated in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework

**Note:** Constructed by the author

## Methodology

### 1. Research Tools

This study designed a preliminary questionnaire consisting of four parts with a total of 88 questions. It includes six questions on basic teacher information, 38 questions on educational beliefs, 17 questions on work engagement, and 27 questions on efficacy. All three questionnaires use Likert's five-point scale, ranging from 1 to 5, to indicate a transition from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The distribution of items across the dimensions is shown in Table 1 below.



Table 1 Distribution of Items

Scale	Dimension	Items
Basic Information of Private College Teachers Educational Beliefs Scale for Private College Teachers	Gender, Age, Marital Status, Teaching Age, Degree, Title	1.1 – 1.6
	Beliefs about Student Management	2.1 – 2.12
	Beliefs about Curriculum and Teaching	2.13 – 2.20
	Beliefs about Evaluation	2.21 – 2.32
	Beliefs about Student Learning	2.33 – 2.38
Work Engagement Scale for Private College Teachers	Vigor	3.1 – 3.6
	Dedication	3.7 – 3.11
	Absorption	3.12 – 3.17
Teaching Efficacy Scale for Private College Teachers	General Teaching Efficacy	4.1 – 4.10
	Personal Teaching Efficacy	4.11 – 4.17

## 2. Research Hypotheses

This study targets teachers in private colleges as its subjects, conducting empirical research on how educational beliefs among these teachers influence their work engagement. Based on the review of literature related to educational beliefs, teaching efficacy, and work engagement, as well as theories such as the theory of reasoned action and conservation of resources theory, this study proposes the following basic hypotheses regarding the relationships among educational beliefs, work engagement, and other related variables in private college teachers:

Hypothesis 1: Educational beliefs of private college teachers have a significant positive impact on their work engagement.

Hypothesis 2: Educational beliefs of private college teachers have a significant positive impact on their teaching efficacy.

Hypothesis 3: Teaching efficacy has a significant positive impact on work engagement.

Hypothesis 4: Teaching efficacy mediates the relationship between private college teachers' educational beliefs and their work engagement.

## 3. Subjects and Testing Method

The study employs a quantitative questionnaire survey method, selecting subjects through voluntary sampling and conducting the survey online using Questionnaire Star. After revising the preliminary questionnaire, the formal questionnaire was distributed, resulting in the collection of 438 valid questionnaires. After data cleaning, 407 effective questionnaires were retained, making the questionnaire recovery rate 92.9%.

## Results

### 1. Reliability and Validity Analysis of the Questionnaires

The data analysis and statistical procedures of this research can be delineated into the following steps: Initially, the study employs SPSS26.0 to test the reliability and validity of the scales measuring the educational beliefs, work engagement, and teaching efficacy among private college teachers. Subsequently, an analysis of the current status of educational beliefs, teaching efficacy, and work engagement is conducted, along with correlation and regression analyses to investigate the relationships among these three principal variables. Lastly, should the relationships among these variables prove significant, it becomes imperative to examine their specific mechanisms of action and the mediating role of teaching efficacy.

#### 1.1 Reliability and Validity Analysis of the Questionnaire





This study conducted reliability and validity tests on the questionnaire using SPSS26.0. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The overall reliability for the scales measuring educational beliefs, work engagement, and teaching efficacy among private college teachers was found to be 0.975. This indicates that the reliability of these three scales is highly satisfactory.

Exploratory factor analysis was utilized to test the validity of the questionnaire. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values for the scales of educational beliefs, work engagement, and teaching efficacy among private college teachers were 0.962, with P-values all less than 0.05. Therefore, all three scales passed the structural validity test. In summary, the three scales used in this study have good reliability and validity, ensuring that the research data are reliable and the questionnaire items are accurate and effective.

#### 1.2 Analysis of the Current Status of Educational Beliefs, Teaching Efficacy, and Work Engagement

Table 2 Overall Status of Educational Beliefs, Work Engagement, and Teaching Efficacy among Private College Teachers

	Educational Beliefs Overall	Work Engagement Overall	Teaching Efficacy Overall
Mean (Average)	3.346	3.331	3.128
SD (Standard Deviation)	0.716	0.845	0.710

Using SPSS for descriptive statistical analysis, Table 2 shows that the overall average score for educational beliefs among private college teachers is 3.346, which is close to the "medium" standard on the scale. This indicates that the educational belief levels of the teachers surveyed are at a medium level. The overall average score for work engagement among private college teachers is 3.331, also close to the "medium" standard on the scale, indicating that the work engagement levels of the surveyed private college teachers are at a medium level. The overall average score for teaching efficacy among private college teachers is 3.128, which is near the "medium" standard on the scale, suggesting that teaching efficacy is at a medium level.

#### 1.3 Correlation Analysis of Educational Beliefs, Teaching Efficacy, and Work Engagement

Table 3 Correlation Coefficient Matrix among Variables

Variables	Educational Beliefs	Work Engagement	Teaching Efficacy
Educational Beliefs	1		
Work Engagement	0.669**	1	
Teaching Efficacy	0.563**	0.510**	1

Note: \*\* indicates  $p < 0.01$

The analysis of Table 3 reveals significant positive correlations between teachers' educational beliefs and their work engagement. The correlation between teachers' educational beliefs and work engagement is significant at the 0.01 level ( $p < 0.01$ ), with a correlation coefficient of 0.669. This indicates a moderate positive correlation, preliminarily confirming the validity of Hypothesis H1; there is also a significant positive correlation between teachers' educational beliefs and teaching efficacy. The correlation between teachers' educational beliefs and teaching efficacy is significant at the 0.01 level ( $p < 0.01$ ), with a correlation coefficient of 0.563, indicating a moderate positive correlation, which preliminarily confirms the validity of Hypothesis H2; similarly, there is a significant positive correlation between teachers' teaching efficacy and work engagement. The correlation between teaching efficacy and work engagement is significant at the 0.01 level ( $p < 0.01$ ), with a correlation coefficient of 0.510, indicating a moderate positive correlation, which preliminarily confirms the validity of Hypothesis H3.

#### 1.4 Regression Analysis of Educational Beliefs, Teaching Efficacy, and Work Engagement

Table 4 Regression Analysis of Educational Beliefs, Teaching Efficacy, and Work Engagement

Model	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		T	Collinearity Statistics		R <sup>2</sup>	F
			$\beta$	Standard Error		Tolerance	IF		
1	Work Engagement	e Educational Beliefs	0.691	0.149	4.639**	1	1	0.448	328.005**
			0.789	0.044	18.112**				
2	Teaching Efficacy	e Educational Beliefs	0.941	0.180	5.230**	1	1	0.317	187.565**
			0.720	0.053	13.695**				
3	Work Engagement	e Teaching Efficacy	1.757	0.137	12.843**	1	1	0.260	142.365**
			0.470	0.039	11.932**				

Note: \* indicates  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* indicates  $p < 0.01$

#### 1.4.1 Regression Analysis of Teachers' Educational Beliefs and Work Engagement

Model 1 is constructed with the educational beliefs of private college teachers as the independent variable and teachers' work engagement as the dependent variable, as shown in Table 4. A regression analysis of the relationship between educational beliefs and work engagement among private college teachers revealed that the VIF values are significantly less than 10, indicating no multicollinearity between educational beliefs and work engagement, thus validating the regression analysis results.

In the regression equation of Model 1, F is 328.005 with a p-value less than 0.01, suggesting that Model 1's regression equation is a good fit for the population and can effectively explain the variance. With  $R^2 = 0.448$ , this indicates that educational beliefs can predict 44.80% of the variance in work engagement. If Y represents work engagement and X represents educational beliefs, then Model 1's regression equation can be represented as  $Y = 0.691 + 0.789 \times X$ , showing a significant positive impact of educational beliefs on work engagement ( $\beta = 0.789$ ,  $t = 18.112$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis H1 is formally confirmed.

#### 1.4.2 Regression Analysis of Teachers' Educational Beliefs and Teaching Efficacy

Model 2 is constructed with the educational beliefs of private college teachers as the independent variable and teachers' teaching efficacy as the dependent variable, as indicated in Table 4. The regression analysis between educational beliefs and teaching efficacy among private college teachers revealed that the VIF values are all less than 10, indicating no multicollinearity between educational beliefs and teaching efficacy, thus validating the regression analysis results.

The F-value of Model 2's regression equation is 187.565, with a corresponding p-value less than 0.01. This indicates that Model 2's regression equation is a good fit for the population and can effectively explain the variance. With an  $R^2$  of 0.317, this means that overall educational beliefs can predict 31.70% of the variance in overall teaching efficacy, showing a good fit. If Z represents teachers' teaching efficacy and X represents educational beliefs, then the regression equation for Model 2 is expressed as  $Z = 0.941 + 0.720 \times X$ , demonstrating a significant positive impact of educational beliefs on teaching efficacy ( $\beta = 0.720$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis H2 is formally confirmed.

#### 1.4.3 Regression Analysis of Teaching Efficacy and Work Engagement

Model 3 is constructed with the teaching efficacy of private college teachers as the independent variable and teachers' work engagement as the dependent variable, as indicated in Table 4. The regression analysis between teaching efficacy and work engagement among private college teachers showed that the VIF values are all less than 10, indicating no multicollinearity between teaching efficacy and work engagement, thus validating the regression analysis results.

The F-value of Model 3's regression equation is 142.365, with a corresponding p-value less than 0.01. This indicates that Model 3's regression equation is a good fit for the population and can effectively explain the variance. With an  $R^2$  of 0.260, this means that teaching efficacy can predict 26.00% of the variance in work engagement. If Y represents the work engagement of teachers and Z represents the teaching efficacy

of teachers, then the regression equation for Model 3 can be expressed as  $Y = 1.757 + 0.470 \times Z$ , demonstrating a significant positive impact of teaching efficacy on work engagement ( $\beta = 0.470$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis H3 is formally confirmed.

## 2. The Mediating Role of Teaching Efficacy in the Impact of Educational Beliefs on Work Engagement among Private College Teachers

This study will utilize the PROCESS 3.5 plugin in SPSS26.0, employing the Bootstrap method to test the mediation effect within the model, with the number of random resampling set to 5000 and the confidence interval set at 95%.

Initially, with work engagement as the dependent variable, educational beliefs as the independent variable, and teaching efficacy as the mediator, Models 1, 2, and 3 are entered into the regression model sequentially. Observing the following Table 5 reveals that the  $\beta$  value for the impact of educational beliefs on work engagement among private college teachers is 0.789, with  $p < 0.001$ , indicating a significant positive effect of educational beliefs on work engagement, thus confirming Hypothesis H1; The  $\beta$  value for the impact of educational beliefs on teaching efficacy among private college teachers is 0.718, with  $p < 0.001$ , indicating a significant positive effect, thus confirming Hypothesis H2; The  $\beta$  value for the impact of teaching efficacy on work engagement among private college teachers is 0.180, with  $p < 0.001$ , indicating a significant positive effect, thus confirming Hypothesis H3.

Table 5 Analysis of the Mediating Effect of Teaching Efficacy

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Work Engagement		Teaching Efficacy		Work Engagement	
	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t
Educational Beliefs	0.789	18.112***	0.718	5.230***	0.659	12.803***
Teaching Efficacy					0.180	4.478***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.4736		0.3165		0.4475	
F	181.7659***		187.5647***		328.0553***	

Note: \* indicates  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* indicates  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* indicates  $p < 0.001$

Secondly, the indirect effect of teaching efficacy is further validated using the Bootstrap method. The results from Table 4.25 show that the estimate of the direct effect is 0.659, with a 95% confidence interval of [0.558, 0.760], which does not include 0. The estimate of the indirect effect is 0.130, with a 95% confidence interval of [0.074, 0.187], which also does not include 0, indicating that the mediating effect is significant.

Finally, based on the hierarchical regression and Bootstrap method tests of indirect effects, the mediating effect of teaching efficacy between educational beliefs and work engagement has been validated. The above results confirm the initial hypothesis H4, that the mediating effect of teaching efficacy is partial, meaning that even with the inclusion of teaching efficacy, educational beliefs still have a direct positive impact on work engagement. Teaching efficacy plays a partial mediating role between educational beliefs and work engagement, thus establishing Hypothesis H4.

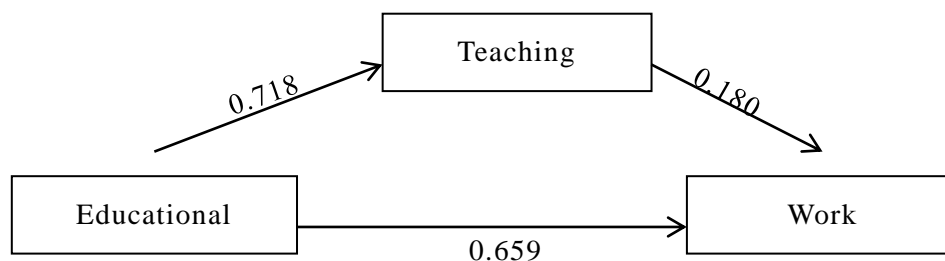
Table 6 Decomposition of Indirect, Direct, and Total Effects

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Relative Effect Size
Indirect Effect	0.130	0.029	0.074	0.187	16.5%
Direct Effect	0.659	0.052	0.558	0.760	83.5%
Total Effect	0.789	0.044	0.703	0.874	

Moreover, the direct effect (0.659) and indirect effect (0.130) account for 83.5% and 16.5% of the total effect (0.789), respectively. Based on this, a mediating effect pathway diagram can be drawn to



illustrate the role of teaching efficacy in the relationship between educational beliefs and work engagement among private college teachers, as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Path Diagram of Teaching Efficacy Mediating Effect

**Note:** Constructed by the author

## Discussion

Based on hypotheses derived from the theoretical framework and utilizing data collected from surveys for descriptive analysis, variance analysis, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and mediation effect analysis, this study has validated its hypotheses. Below, the discussion focuses on conclusions that align with the research expectations:

### 1. Moderate Levels of Educational Beliefs, Work Engagement, and Teaching Efficacy among Private College Teachers

The survey revealed that the overall mean scores for educational beliefs, work engagement, and teaching efficacy among private college teachers are 3.346, 3.331, and 3.128, respectively. Positioned between "moderately agree" and "agree" within the five-point Likert scale, these findings indicate that the levels of educational beliefs, work engagement, and teaching efficacy are moderate. This suggests a general lukewarm enthusiasm among private college teachers towards their work, influenced by motivational mechanisms, task assignments, beliefs, and other factors, leading to a reluctance to invest more energy into their roles.

### 2. Positive Impact of Educational Beliefs on Work Engagement

The confirmation of Hypothesis 1 indicates a direct positive impact of teachers' educational beliefs on work engagement, with educational beliefs accounting for 44.80% of the variance in work engagement. Higher educational beliefs among private college teachers lead to increased dedication to their roles, a belief in the value of their educational efforts, and self-affirmation, driving them to commit fully to their educational duties regardless of challenges. This positive effect concurs with Guo Wen's findings on the positive relationship between teachers' educational beliefs and work engagement.

### 3. Partial Mediating Role of Teaching Efficacy

The substantiation of Hypothesis 4 highlights the significant mediating effect of teaching efficacy, indicating that teaching efficacy can enhance the positive impact of educational beliefs on work engagement. This suggests that improvements in work engagement among private college teachers could begin with enhancing their teaching efficacy. Notably, the mediation analysis revealed that teaching efficacy serves as a partial mediator in the positive influence mechanism between educational beliefs and work engagement.

### 4. Significant Differences in Work Engagement Based on Age, Teaching Experience, and Professional Title

Analysis of variables such as age, teaching experience, and professional title revealed varying impacts on the main variables. Significant differences were found in educational beliefs, work engagement, and



teaching efficacy based on age, teaching experience, and professional title. Higher professional titles are associated with stronger educational beliefs and, consequently, a higher likelihood of engaging in educational work.

These findings underline the complex interplay between educational beliefs, teaching efficacy, and work engagement among private college teachers. Enhancing educational beliefs and teaching efficacy appears to be key to improving work engagement and, by extension, the quality of education in private colleges.

## Conclusion

The work engagement of private college teachers is pivotal for enhancing the quality of higher education in private institutions and for the development of these teachers themselves. Earlier literature and case studies have progressively enriched the theoretical descriptions of the impact of educational beliefs on work engagement, yet empirical studies explicating this relationship remain relatively scarce. Following a review of the literature, this study utilized data analysis and hypothesis testing to primarily investigate the relationship between educational beliefs and work engagement, as well as the mediating role of teaching efficacy, yielding the following key conclusions:

### 1. Direct Impact of Educational Beliefs on Work Engagement in Private College Teachers

While previous research on the impact of educational beliefs on work engagement has largely focused on secondary school teachers, Guo Wen's empirical study suggests that enhancing teachers' educational beliefs generally leads to more active and higher-quality educational and teaching work. This is also true for private college teachers, where strong educational beliefs correlate with higher work engagement. Accordingly, this study examined the effect of private college teachers' educational beliefs on work engagement, finding that educational beliefs significantly predict work engagement, accounting for 44.80% of the variance. This indicates that private college teachers' work engagement is directly influenced by their educational beliefs; as such beliefs strengthen, work engagement is likely to increase.

### 2. Indirect Impact of Educational Beliefs on Work Engagement Through Teaching Efficacy

Existing research confirms that educational beliefs positively predict teaching efficacy, which in turn positively predicts work engagement. Thus, educational beliefs can indirectly impact the work engagement of private college teachers through teaching efficacy. Simply having educational beliefs without actual engagement is ineffective, necessitating that teachers translate these beliefs into teaching efficacy to enhance work engagement. This study tested the mediating role of teaching efficacy and found that it partially mediates the relationship between educational beliefs and work engagement among private college teachers. This mediation has significant implications for improving work engagement among private college teachers, suggesting that teaching efficacy serves as an intrinsic motivator, crucial for maintaining teachers' vitality, dedication, and focus.

## Recommendation

The principal conclusions of this study offer significant insights for enhancing education and management practices for teachers in private colleges, as well as for strengthening their educational beliefs to improve their level of work engagement. The findings of this research suggest that the educational beliefs of private college teachers have a direct impact on their work engagement, meaning the stronger the educational beliefs, the greater the work engagement. Based on the literature review and the discussion of the results, the following insights and recommendations are proposed:

### 1. Private College Teachers Should Continuously Improve Their Virtue.

Virtue is a hallmark of a noble teacher's character. A teacher lacking in good virtue will not earn the respect and affection of students, parents, and society. To enhance the evaluative beliefs within educational beliefs, teachers must be conscious of improving their moral cultivation. Teachers, as the primary bearers and practitioners of education and a key factor in education, influence and guide the growth and development of students not only with their knowledge but also with their cultivation. Therefore, teachers



should focus on their moral image, as morality is a fundamental dimension of human essence, manifesting the value of human subjectivity and relying on the inner consciousness and self-discipline of the moral subject. The personal factors of a teacher are the fundamental conditions and main factors for realizing teacher morality. As such, teachers can strengthen their moral qualities, clarify their role positioning, and enhance their cultivation from the inside out.

### 2. Private Colleges Must Provide Good Incentive Mechanisms.

The knowledge-belief-action model suggests that people form certain beliefs upon recognizing their level of knowledge, which then influences their actions. Thus, a good incentive mechanism by schools can enhance teachers' evaluative knowledge, thereby also affecting their evaluative beliefs. Schools can offer good incentive mechanisms both materially and spiritually. If private colleges place more emphasis on incentive mechanisms and respect the labor results of teachers, the social value created by the teachers will motivate them to invest more effort into their work, thereby increasing their dedication to work engagement and improving the quality of education in private colleges.

### 3. Society Must Value the Status of Private College Teachers.

Enhancing the evaluative beliefs of private college teachers requires elevating their social status, which is crucial for improving evaluative beliefs. Society needs to pay more attention to private college teachers, elevate their status, and thereby strengthen their evaluative beliefs, leading to higher dedication to work engagement and stronger work motivation.

### 4. Private College Teachers Should Leverage the Power of Teaching Efficacy to Enhance Work Engagement.

Private college teachers need to adopt the correct attitude towards their work. In recent years, many private college teachers have adopted a lackadaisical attitude towards work, which poses significant challenges to the revitalization of education in private colleges. Although teaching levels may not decline in the short term, a long-term disengaged attitude can lead to a lack of initiative and a loss of initial passion for work, which can severely impact student development. Therefore, correcting the work attitude of teachers becomes a primary factor in enhancing their teaching efficacy. Private college teachers need to adopt a professional attitude towards various work challenges, demonstrating determination and perseverance, which will significantly enhance their teaching efficacy.

## References

- Dong, H.X. (2016). Representation and reconstruction of primary and secondary school teachers' educational beliefs from a sociocultural perspective. *Contemporary Educational Science*, 16, 53-56.
- Fang, X. (2008). The basic construction of contemporary normal university students' educational beliefs. *China Adult Education*, 8, 18-26.
- Guo, H. (2017). Research on the educational beliefs of non-normal major junior high school teachers: A case study of Z city in S province. Master's thesis, Sichuan Normal University.
- Guo, X. N. (2008). The current situation, significance, and trend of research on teachers' teaching beliefs. *Foreign Education Studies*, 10, 92-96.
- Hong, X.M., & Pang, L.J. (2006). On the nature, structure, and characteristics of teacher self-efficacy. *Educational Science*, 8, 44-46.
- Kelly, T., & Singh, P. (2020). Educators' engagement and its effect on teaching effectiveness: A mixed-methods study. *Educational Researcher*, 49(6), 397-412.
- Saleh, S., & Hosek, J. (1976). Job involvement: Concepts and measurements. *Academy of Management Journal*, 19, 213-224.
- Smith, J., & Jones, M. (2021). The impact of digital transformation on employee work engagement in remote work environments. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 42(3), 234-250.
- Wang, H.Y., & Xie, F. (2009). A case study of college English teachers' teaching beliefs and methods. *Journal of Harbin College*, 1, 133-137.
- Zhang, L., Wang, H., & Liu, X. (2022). Psychological safety, organizational support, and work engagement:



An empirical study in the tech industry. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 107(1), 142-158.  
Zhao, C.M. (2004). On teacher beliefs. *Contemporary Educational Science*, 9, 11-14.