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A Study on the Current Situation of the Social Mentality of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in China and the Corresponding Countermeasure

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[Abstract]

In this paper, we propose a "social mentality" of primary and secondary school teachers in Anshan City, China. To conduct the study, 298 teachers in Ansan City were selected and a survey was conducted. This study adopted the method of combining literature research and questionnaire survey. The results showed that the overall level of “social mentality” of primary and secondary school teachers in Anshan was relatively high. Teachers’ social support levels differed significantly from educational background, teaching section, administrative position, and school location. The path model shows the interaction mechanism between variables. It appeared that general self-efficacy and job involvement play an important role in the mechanism.

▸ **Key words**: Teachers’ social mentality, Job satisfaction, Social cognition, Social emotion, Job involvement, Social support

[요 약]

본 연구는 중국 안산시의 초중등학교 교사들의 "사회적 사고방식"을 연구하려는 시도가 이루어졌다. 연구를 진행하기 위해 안산시에 있는 298명 교사를 선정하여 설문조사를 실시하였다. 본 연구는 문헌조사와 설문조사를 결합한 방법을 채택하였다. 그 결과 안산시 초·중등학교 교사들의 전반적인 '사회심리학' 수준이 상대적으로 높은 것으로 나타났다. 교육 배경이 다른 교사의 직업 만족도에는 상당한 차이가 있습니다. 경로 모델은 변수 간의 상호 작용 메커니즘을 보여줍니다. 일반적인 자기 효능감과 업무 몰입도는 이 메커니즘에서 중요한 역할을 합니다.

▸ **주제어**: 교사사회 심리, 직업 만족도, 사회 인지, 사회적 감정, 직업몰입, 사회지지도

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I. Introduction

In the study of some disciplines, social mentality is regarded as a research perspective, such as the historiography of mentality[1]. In literature retrieval, this word is frequently and widely used in history, sociology, education, economics and other fields, and regarded as an influential factor of macroeconomic and social development in the transition period. More people use the concept in a conventional sense, directly discussing the relationship between social mentality and other phenomena, or discussing the early warning and regulation of social mentality [2]. Social mentality refers to the direct and common social psychological reaction or psychological situation caused by the development and change of economic relations, political system and the whole social environment in people's social life. It has sociality, popularity and generality.

Social mentality is the macro social state of mind scattered in the whole society or social groups in a period of time, and is the sum of the emotional tone, social consensus and social values of the whole society. Social mentality is manifested through the whole society's fashion, public opinion and social members' feelings of social life, confidence in the future, social motivation and social mood. It interacts with the mainstream ideology and forms a vague, latent and emotional influence on social actors through social identification and emotional infection. It comes from the homogeneity of social individual mentality, but it is not equal to the simple sum of individual mentality, but a newly generated psychological phenomenon with its own characteristics and functions, reflecting the most macroscopic psychological relationship formed by mutual construction between individuals and society [3].

Based on the theoretical framework of social mentality, this study divides teachers' social mentality into four parts: need, cognition, emotion and behavior according to the definition of teachers' social mentality. However, teachers have their own group particularity. In the literature of teacher psychology research, it is found that social support is a very important factor affecting teachers' cognition, emotion and behavior. Some studies show that the higher the level of social support of primary and secondary school teachers, the better their psychological health [4]. At the same time, social support will also affect teachers' job involvement. The more social support teachers have, the more job involvement they will have and the higher work efficiency they will have [5].

Alderfer's ERG Theory points out that the level of job satisfaction can be a continuum [6]. Whether a job can actually meet the individual needs of employees determines its level, and the degree of need satisfaction is directly proportional to job satisfaction. Therefore, this study defines teachers' social needs as teachers' professional satisfaction with their personal situation, which is mainly measured by indicators related to job satisfaction. It was Hoppock who formally proposed the concept of "job satisfaction"[7]. Generally speaking, job satisfaction refers to an individual's emotional reaction, emotional experience and attitude towards his work and environment[14]. A large number of studies at home and abroad have proved that employee dimission, negative mood at work, job performance and mental health are closely related to their job satisfaction. Similarly, in previous studies, teachers' job satisfaction has a significant impact on teaching motivation [8], teaching performance and career pressure . Teachers' job satisfaction is a very complex psychological system, which has been defined by many scholars at home and abroad. This study mainly adopts the viewpoint that teachers' job satisfaction refers to an overall and emotional feeling and view of teachers on their occupation, working conditions and environment.

The research on teacher cognition originated in the 1970s. Under the paradigm of behaviorism, teaching behavior and teaching effect are regarded as a simple causal relationship. With the rapid

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development of cognitive psychology, researchers gradually realize that this ignores the complexity of teaching and fails to fully understand the nature of teaching. The fundamental reason lies in that the inner spiritual life of teachers plays a dominant role in their teaching behavior (Freeman, 2002). With the application of cognitive psychology theory and research methods in teacher research, teacher cognitive research has gradually become a new paradigm of teacher research. Cognition itself is a concept that is difficult to define precisely. The definition of cognition will be different depending on the theoretical perspective or path of researchers. In this study, the cognitive research on primary and secondary school teachers is carried out from the perspectives of teachers as a profession and teachers as individuals. Teachers' cognition of individual state is mainly reflected in teachers' general sense of self-efficacy. Teachers' general self-efficacy is their subjective judgment of their ability to influence students' learning behavior and academic performance. Such judgment of their professional self-confidence will affect teachers' enthusiasm for work, and affect their task selection, effort level and persistence [9]. Self-efficacy comes from the core concept of Bandura's theory. According to Bandura's theory, the factors affecting self-efficacy mainly include achievement experience of individual behavior, substitute experience, imagination experience, verbal persuasion, emotional arousal and so on [10]. In the process of sorting out the research on teachers' social cognition from both social and individual aspects, it is found that teachers' cognition of social status is mainly studied from the analysis of reasons, development changes, policy analysis, countermeasures and suggestions, and mostly used in qualitative research. In the cognitive research on teachers' self-efficacy at the individual level, teachers' self-efficacy mainly refers to Bandura's theory, so teachers' self-efficacy has a good theoretical framework for transfer. In this study, teachers' general self-efficacy is used to measure teachers' cognition.

Hargreaves pointed out that teaching is not only a cognitive activity, but also a strong emotional affair. Like cognition, emotions also exist widely in teaching activities and have a significant impact on teachers. Studies have shown that positive emotions can make teachers think actively, which on the one hand can effectively improve teachers' teaching efficiency, and on the other hand, can fully stimulate students' interest in learning and further stimulate their subjective initiative, so that students' desire for knowledge can burst out. Therefore, teachers' good emotional ability is the basic requirement of teachers' professional quality.

The definition of social emotional ability has not been unified in the field of psychology. Among them, Goleman's definition of social emotional competence is highly recommended. He believes that social emotional competence is a comprehensive concept of skills and behaviors including emotional competence and social competence [11]. In addition to the proper expression and control of emotions, assessment and understanding of different emotions, it also includes the ability to solve different problems in social situations. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has refined the five core competencies of social emotional ability. These include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal skills, and responsible decision making . This study defines the concept of teachers' social ability based on CASEL organization. In this study, teachers' social emotion refers to the ability of teachers to effectively identify and manage emotions, care for students, establish positive teacher-student relationship, effectively deal with challenges and make responsible decisions in teaching and social life.

With the rise and development of positive psychology, some scholars try to improve teachers' working conditions by constantly exploring teachers' positive psychological qualities, so as to promote teachers' working enthusiasm and improve their work performance. It is based on this purpose

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that job involvement, as a positive individual state, has entered the field of vision of researchers and become a new research hotspot in the field of organizational behavior and human resource management, job involvement originated in the west in the 1990s. In China, systematic empirical studies have only been carried out in recent years, starting with studies on enterprise employees, and now there are a few studies in the field of education. In a small number of educational studies, some researchers have proved that teachers' job involvement has an important impact on their work effectiveness and physical and mental health. Teachers with high job involvement have higher work efficiency and are less likely to suffer from job burnout and related health problems [12]. Therefore, it can be said that teachers' job involvement has a significant impact on the implementation of national education policies and is a key factor in the reform and development of education. Among the influencing factors of individual characteristics, demography variables of internal individual factors include teachers' educational background, teaching age and health degree, which affect teachers' enthusiasm in job involvement. Among the personality factors, such as autonomy, optimism, flexibility, perseverance and other excellent traits will positively affect teachers' work involvement and improve their professional happiness. In this study, teachers' job involvement refers to their participation in educational work and career, as well as their expectations and plans for career development.

II. Research Methods and Process

2.1 Main Methods

The main methods used in this study are empirical research methods such as documentary analysis method, observation method and questionnaire survey method, especially questionnaire survey method, which is analyzed based on the full possession of first-hand data.

2.2 Procedure

The main purpose of this research is to identify teachers' social mentality. To do so, the following research questions are analyzed: 1) Primary and secondary school teachers are slightly above the theoretical median in all sub- factors of social mentality. 2) These sub- factors show some differences in demographic variables. 3) By exploring the interaction mechanism between these different sub- factors to find the most effective factors in the social mentality of primary and secondary school teachers.

For the first question, descriptive statistics of five sub-factors such as teachers' job satisfaction, general self-efficacy, social-emotional ability, job involvement, and social support were analyzed to determine whether the sub-factor levels are higher than the theoretical median.

For the second question, t-test and ANOVA were performed to investigate whether the five sub-factors are different among demographic characteristics (gender, age, educational background, marital status, and annual income) and teaching characteristics (teaching age, teaching section, work preparation status, professional title, school location, and administrative positions).

For the last question, the relationship between the five sub-factors was identified. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was then carried out to verify whether these five sub-factors properly consist of the teacher's social mentality. After the CFA was conducted, a path analysis was applied to construct a model for the relationship between factors。

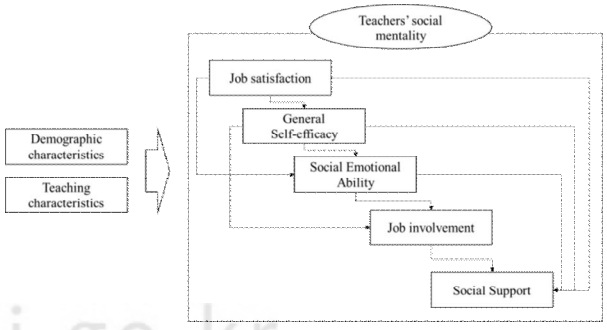

Fig. 1. Hypothetical Path Model of the Study

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2.3 Research Hypothesis

Based on the previous research, this study puts forward the corresponding research hypothesis.

Hypothesis H1: The five factors of a teachers' social mentality are higher than the theoretical median.

Hypothesis H2: There are significant differences between the five sub- factors of primary and secondary school teachers among demographic characteristics (gender, age, education background, marital status, annual income) and teaching characteristics (years of teaching, teaching section, work preparation status, professional title, school location, and administrative positions).

Hypothesis H3: By exploring the interaction mechanism between different sub- factors, teachers' job satisfaction is shown to be the most effective factor in the social mentality of primary and secondary school teachers.

2.4 Participants

In this study, 308 primary and secondary school teachers were selected in Anshan City for questionnaire survey. After excluding the invalid questionnaire, 298 questionnaires were obtained. The efficiency of the questionnaire was 96.7%.

First, the demographic characteristics of the participants were presented. For gender, "Female" (80.2%) was higher than "Male." (The large gap in the number of male and female samples may be related to the professional nature of primary and secondary school teachers, which leads to the uncoordinated proportion of men and women in primary school teachers.) For age, "20-25" (45%) was the highest, with the next highest category being "26-30" (20.8%). With educational background, "Undergraduate" (62.8%) was the highest, and the next highest was "Graduate" (19.8%). In the case of marital status, "Unmarried" (54%) was the highest, and the second-highest was "Married" (41.9%). "Less than 30,000" (34.9%) was the highest for annual income, with the next highest category being "30,000-50,000" (29.5%).

Next, participants' teaching characteristics were presented. For years of teaching, "0-1 years of teaching" (42.6%) was the highest category, and the next highest category was "2-5 years of teaching" (28.5%). For the teaching section, "High school" (36.2%) was the highest category, and the second-highest category was "Junior high school" (34.9%). As to work preparation status, "Prepared" (56.4%) was higher than "Unstructured." For professional titles, "Elementary (Primary 2, Primary 1, Secondary 3, Secondary 2)" (62.1%) was the highest category, and the second-highest category was "Intermediate (Primary High, Secondary 1)" (22.5%). For school location, "City" (67.4%) was the highest, and the next highest was "The county" (24.5%). For administrative positions, "No" (74.50%) was higher than "Yes."

2.5 Measurements

The questionnaire used in this study is named "Questionnaire on the Work Status of Primary and Secondary School Teachers". In order to allow the respondents to treat and answer the questionnaire without burden, all the questionnaires were filled in anonymously. This questionnaire is an integrated one, which is composed of several social psychology professional scales and self-made questionnaires in addition to instruction language and demography questions. Among them, the scales used in various sub- factors of teachers' social mentality are on the one hand drawn from the relevant scales in Wang Junxiu's "Chinese Social Psychological Survey Questionnaire".

2.6 Teachers' Needs Scale

The "Teacher Job Satisfaction Scale" was compiled by Feng Bolin (1996). The scale has 26 items, including five sub- factors: self-actualization, work intensity, salary income, leadership relationship, and colleague relationship. The scale measures teachers' job satisfaction using a 5-point Likert scale.

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2.7 Teacher Cognitive Scale

The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) was compiled by Professor Schwarzer (1997) and his colleagues. There are 10 items in the scale, and a single dimension involves the self-confidence of the individual when encountering setbacks or difficulties. A 5-point Likert scale is used.

2.8 Teachers' Emotion Scale

The Social Emotional Ability Scale (DSECS) was jointly compiled by Dr. George Bear and Dr. Chunyan Yang from the University of Delaware (Bar-On, 2006). The scale includes a total of 12 items, divided into 4 sub- factors, namely responsible decision-making, peer relationship, social awareness and self-management. The scale uses a 5-point Likert scale.

2.9 Teachers' Behavior Scale

The Expectation Scale for Teachers' Professional Engagement and Career Development Aspirations (PECDA) was compiled by two scholars, Watt and Richardson (2008), and is a mature scale developed abroad. It is used to investigate teachers' professional investment, effort, persistence, and future career planning. A 5-point Likert scale was used for this instrument.

2.10 Teachers' Social Support Scale

The Perceived Social Support Scale (PSSS) was revised by Jiang et al. (2001). It is divided into family support, friend support, leadership (relatives, colleagues) and other support. There are 3 sub- factors and 12 items. A 5-point Likers scale was used for this instrument.

The social needs, social cognition, social emotion, social behavior and social support of teachers' social mentality are investigated through the five core variables of teachers' job satisfaction, teachers' general self-efficacy, teachers' social emotional competence, teachers' social support and teachers' job involvement. The data were analyzed by the lavaan package in R version 4.1.3.

III. Empirical Analysis

Through the statistical analysis, this study analyzes the core components of primary and secondary school teachers' social mentality: Teachers' needs, social cognition, social emotion, social involvement and social support. This research focuses on the differences of various dimensions under demographic variables, finds out the influencing factors, and puts forward feasible strategies to adjust primary and secondary school teachers' social mentality.

The basic characteristics of the instrument were analyzed, as shown in Table 1. In the table, specific information—including sample size, number of items, Cronbach's α—and the mean and standard deviation are presented. Unlike the research hypothesis, job satisfaction did not exceed the theoretical mean of 3.0. Other dimensions of social mentality were higher than their theoretical medians.

Table 1. The Overall Levels of Teachers' Social Mentality Based on Background Characteristics

Dimension	Number of items	Cronbach's α	M	SD	Theoretical Median
Job Satisfaction	26	0.92	2.25	0.63	3.0
General Self-Efficacy	10	0.96	2.67	0.79	2.5
Social -Emotional Ability	12	0.96	2.76	0.83	2.5
Job Involvement	17	0.98	3.62	1.02	3.0
Social Support	12	0.98	4.69	1.62	4.0

Table 2 shows the results of the analyses on the level of teachers' job satisfaction, general self-efficacy, social-emotional ability, job involvement and social support. An ANOVA and t-test were performed to identify the differences in the level of five dimensions among demographic and teaching characteristics.

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Table 2. Main Results

Dimension	Significant difference was found between..	Pairs that were significantly different..
Job Satisfaction	Educational Background	- "Dr" (2.305) > "Technical secondary school and below" (1.762) - "Undergraduate" (2.305) > "Technical secondary school and below" (1.762).
General Self-Efficacy	Educational Background	- "Dr" (2.759) > "Technical secondary school and below" (2.195) - "Undergraduate" (2.726) > "Technical secondary school and below" (2.195).
	Teaching Section	- "Junior high school" (2.863) > "Primary" (2.481)
Social-Emotional Ability	Gender	- "Female" (2.825) > "Male" (2.501)
	Educational Background	- "Dr" (2.836) > "Technical secondary school and below" (1.904) - "Undergraduate" (2.865) > "Technical secondary school and below" (1.904).
	Marital Status	- "Unmarried" (2.847) > "Divorced" (1.958).
	Teaching Section	- "Junior high school" (2.927) > "Primary" (2.633)
	Administrative Positions	- "No" (2.85) > "Yes" (2.50)
Job Involvement	Gender	- 1) "Female" (3.691) > "Male" (3.358)
	Educational Background	- "Undergraduate" (3.707) > "Technical secondary school and below" (2.847).
	Years of Teaching	- "0-1 years of teaching" (3.737) > "1l-15 years of teaching" (3.044)
	Teaching Section	- "Primary" (3.447) > "Junior high school" (3.828)
Social Support	Educational Background	- "Dr" (4.719) > "Technical secondary school and below" (3.513) - "Undergraduate" (4.881) > "Technical secondary and below" (3.513).
	Teaching Section	- "Junior high school" (5.051) > "Primary" (4.409)
	School Location	- "The county" (5.10) > "City" (4.553)
	Administrative Position	- "No" (4.814) > "Yes" (4.317)

This study adopted a path analysis approach to identify the interaction mechanism between the five variables of teachers' social mentalities. Before the path analysis, however, a CFA was carried out to confirm that the five variables properly constitute teachers' social mentalities.

Following the CFA, a path analysis was carried out to analyze the interaction mechanism between the five variables of teachers' social mentality. Path analysis is a method first developed by Sewall Wright (1934). It verifies a research model that shows causality (a research model that shows the relationship between independent, intervening, and dependent variables) based on previous theories and studies in the field.

The chosen five variables were treated as observed in performing path analysis. The measurement of the five variables consisted of items selected as appropriate items in the previous CFA analysis. Before performing the path analysis, normality and multicollinearity of each variable were diagnosed.

First, kurtosis and skewness were examined to confirm normality. Multicollinearity was also reviewed by analyzing the variance expansion coefficient (VIF). As for whether the multicollinearity assumption was satisfied, the general standard "10.0 or less" was applied. The analysis results are presented in Table 3. The results showed that skewness (-0.76-0.56) and kurtosis (-0.26-0.41) suffice the normality assumption. VIFs of all variables also fell below 10, which reflects no multicollinearity.

Table 3. Normality and Multicollinearity of Study Variable

Variable	skewness	CR	kurtosis	CR	VIF
Social Support	-0.61	-2.17	-0.17	-0.31	5.54
Social Emotional Ability	-0.76	-2.7	-0.26	-0.46	2.72
Job Satisfaction	0.56	1.99	0.41	0.73	NA
General Self-Efficacy	-0.36	-1.28	-0.22	-0.4	3.31
Job Involvement	-0.75	-2.67	0.3	0.54	3.93

Furthermore, correlations between variables were examined, as shown in Table 4. Values ranged from 0.27 (job satisfaction-job involvement) and 0.86 (job involvement and social support).

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Table 4. Correlations Between Variables of Study

Variables	Job Satisfaction	General Self-Efficacy	Social Emotional Ability	Job Involvement	Social Support
Job Satisfaction	1.00				
General Self-Efficacy	0.35	1.00			
Social Emotional Ability	0.51	0.76	1.00		
Job Involvement	0.27	0.70	0.65	1.00	
Social Support	0.35	0.79	0.73	0.86	1.00

Then, a causal model among variables of teachers' social mentality variables was established to perform a path analysis. Table 5 also presents fit indices of the established model. According to the results, all fit indices reflected a good fit of the model, including CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR.

Table 5. Fit Indices of the Path Model

Fit Indices	Chi-sq	df	p-value	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Value	1.51	1	0.21	0.99	0.99	0.04	0.02

Next, the path coefficients of the model were analyzed, as shown in Figure 2 and Table 6. In Figure 2, only the path coefficients significant were written. Unlike the study model, coefficients between "job satisfaction → general self-efficacy," "job satisfaction → social support," "general self-efficacy → social support," and "social-emotional ability → job involvement" were not significant. On the other hand, significant coefficients ranged from 0.18 (job satisfaction → social-emotional ability) to 0.7 (general self-efficacy → job involvement).

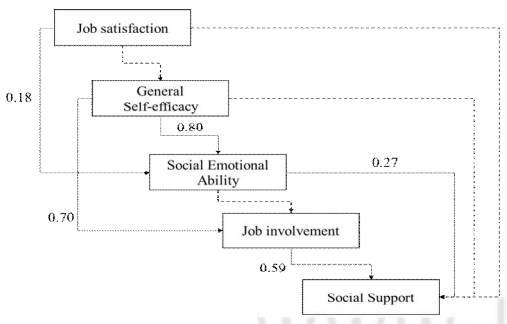

Fig. 2. Final Path Model of Teachers' Social Mentality

Table 6. Path Coefficients of the Path Model

Variable	Standardized Path Coefficient (β)	Path Coefficient (B)	SE	CR	NA
Social Support ← Job Involvement	0.59	0.93	0.10	9.23	0.00
Social Support ← Social Emotional Ability	0.27	0.52	0.11	4.41	0.00
Social Support ← General Self-Efficacy	0.14	0.29	0.16	1.77	0.07
Social Support ← Job Satisfaction	-0.04	-0.11	0.06	-1.68	0.09
Job Involvement ← Social Emotional Ability	0.05	0.06	0.14	0.46	0.64
Job Involvement ← General Self-Efficacy	0.70	0.91	0.12	7.39	0.00
Social Emotional Ability ← General Self-Efficacy	0.79	0.84	0.04	19.16	0.00
Social Emotional Ability ← Job Satisfaction	0.17	0.24	0.05	4.47	0.00
General Self-Efficacy ← Job Satisfaction	-0.01	-0.01	0.08	-0.01	0.98

IV. Conclusion

The social status of primary and secondary school teachers is gradually improving after publicity in recent years, but there are still many problems, such as the loss of rural teachers and the decline of rural education. The imbalance between urban and rural development has resulted in many primary and secondary school teachers willing to stay in big cities, and some excellent young people are not so active in education. In the process of urbanization, many new problems have emerged, such as the sharp increase in the education of left behind children, migrant children and children from divorced families, which poses new challenges to primary and secondary school teachers. In addition, with the increasingly fierce competition in modern society, the pace of life and work is faster than before. The development of information media makes all kinds of information

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exposed to the public. The work of primary and secondary school teachers involves thousands of families, so it has attracted wide attention. In this context, it is very necessary to deeply understand and explore the social mentality of primary and secondary school teachers. Understanding the social mentality of primary and secondary school teachers, exploring its influencing factors, and putting forward targeted solutions to actively promote the psychological construction of primary and secondary school teachers is an effective way for Chinese education to move towards a healthier and more dynamic way.

The research limitations and future research directions of this study are as follows:

Firstly, the target population of this study is primary and secondary school teachers in Anshan City. Due to the practical limitations of the study, convenient sampling was performed so that any teacher could respond to an online survey rather than applying a theoretically developed sampling frame. Therefore, further research is needed to improve the reliability and validity of the questionnaire and establish standardized norms.

Moreover, due to the limited time and energy, this study only selects 308 primary and secondary school teachers in urban and rural areas of Anshan City as the research object, and does not select samples in every district, county and village of Anshan City. This may affect the generalization of the research conclusion, so that it may not fully represent the overall level of social mentality of primary and secondary school teachers in Anshan City. Therefore, in the follow-up research, the sample size can be increased, and the stratified sampling involves each district, county and village in Anshan City.

Thirdly, for the measurement of each specific concept, no unique scale has been developed, but the classical scale has been used. Therefore, the measurement work in this study is not unique enough. Follow-up research should combine the characteristics of the research object with the development of one or two unique scales to highlight the characteristics of this research.

Fourthly, this study adopts the self-reporting method to investigate and study the social mentality of primary and secondary school teachers in Anshan city. The subjects may have some concealment or social approval in the process of answering. In the further study, a combination of various methods can be used to measure the social mentality. Moreover, in addition to descriptive analysis and difference analysis, correlation and regression analysis can also be used to separate each group for detailed analysis, such as separate class teachers for group psychological analysis. This involves a more professional and complex hierarchical model. Limited to the level of this research, it is necessary to further strengthen learning and improve data analysis ability.

Fifthly, the special development and utilization of a large number of interview information is not enough, but only used as a supplement and explanation of data analysis. In this way, it is easy to form the feeling of paying attention to data and ignoring text content. In the future, qualitative research will be carried out systematically and deeply. Only by combining qualitative research and quantitative research methods thoroughly and carefully, can teachers' social mentality and the relationship between various dimensions be further analyzed.

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