

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Strategies for enhancing the resilience of rural teachers from the perspective of Chinese rural school principals, in the post-pandemic period

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ABSTRACT

The impact of pandemic control measures on student education in rural areas of China, particularly focusing on the challenges faced by educators. With the adoption of diverse pedagogical methods like online education during the pandemic, little attention has been given to the specific struggles of teachers in rural regions. The pandemic has exacerbated existing issues, leading to an alarming increase in rural teacher attrition. High turnover rates have detrimental effects on educational excellence, school culture, and the overall cohesion of educational institutions. Furthermore, the costs incurred to recruit and train new instructors in impoverished or remote communities pose additional challenges. As China lifts COVID-19 restrictions in 2022, a pivotal moment emerges for the advancement of rural education. To address challenges and support early-career teachers' resilience, a comprehensive understanding of the rural educational environment is crucial. By prioritizing the well-being and needs of new teachers, education leaders can provide effective support and resources in the post-pandemic era, leading to a more optimistic scholastic atmosphere and improved student achievement.

Keywords: teacher resilience; rural education; principal leadership; post epidemic period

1. Introduction

Since the inception of rigorous pandemic control measures in China in 2020, the domain of student education has garnered substantial sociocultural attention. Diverse pedagogical methods, including online education and video assignments, have been adopted to facilitate learning. However, the ramifications of the pandemic on education, both during and post-crisis, have primarily directed academic research towards the investigation of the effects of isolation policies on education in China, with minimal consideration bestowed upon educators laboring in rural regions of the country. It is imperative to recognize that the pivotal contributions of these teachers bear significant implications for the quality of rural education. Unfortunately, the pandemic has introduced a myriad of challenges that have further compounded the already formidable circumstances they face. Significantly, an escalating number of rural teachers are relinquishing their positions due to a plethora of issues, and the pandemic has acted as a catalyst, exacerbating this prevailing trend.

The challenges confronted by neophyte educators and the tactics employed to bolster teacher resilience

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assume paramount importance in elevating educational standards. Undoubtedly, the initial five years of a teacher's vocation represent a particularly arduous period, and a substantial proportion of nascent teachers opt to abandon the profession within this timeframe, primarily owing to factors such as meager remuneration, onerous workloads, and a dearth of support mechanisms^[1]. This escalating attrition rate inevitably engenders deleterious repercussions for educational excellence as it engenders the loss of seasoned instructors and engenders disruption within educational institutions. Additional research conducted by Sorensen and Ladd^[2], revealed a conspicuous correlation between elevated teacher turnover rates and a decline in school culture, which precipitates diminished morale, heightened stress levels, and an amplified susceptibility to burnout amongst educators. Moreover, the ramifications of pronounced teacher attrition permeate beyond the confines of monetary outlays, extending into the social and emotional realms of the school community, thereby profoundly impacting school cohesion^[3]. Consequently, the associated costs incurred by educational establishments to recruit and train fresh instructors are further compounded, rendering this endeavor especially challenging for schools catering to impoverished communities or remote regions^[4].

Amidst the advent of pandemic control policies in 2020, a myriad of predicaments spanning healthcare, safety, pedagogy, and student progression has persistently plagued rural education in China, thereby imposing an even greater burden on fledgling educators contending with escalating attrition rates^[5]. Nevertheless, a watershed moment materialized in 2022 with China's proclamation to lift all restrictions implemented in response to the proliferation of COVID-19, signifying a pivotal juncture for the advancement of rural education in the country. This declaration not only represents a momentous leap forward in revitalizing rural education in China but also heralds the dawn of a transformative phase marked by emerging technologies, evolving landscapes, and a fresh array of challenges.

Thus, it becomes indispensable to discern the multifaceted challenges encountered by neophyte educators and to devise efficacious strategies that nurture their resilience during the nascent stages of their careers, thereby fostering higher teacher retention rates and ultimately amplifying the pinnacle of educational excellence^[6]. By employing an analytical framework that places rural instructors' fortitude at its core, we shall meticulously examine the intrinsic and extrinsic educational environments within rural schools, thereby endowing rural education leaders with invaluable insights into the working conditions and exigencies faced by early-career teachers. Equipped with such discernment, these leaders can offer unparalleled support and allocate more comprehensive resources to novice rural instructors in the post-pandemic era^[7]. Furthermore, the augmentation of new teachers' resilience reaps profound dividends, not solely in terms of cultivating an optimistic scholastic atmosphere, but also in enhancing student achievement and fostering the holistic advancement of the educational framework.

2. Context

Widespread discontent pervades the ranks of rural educators in China with regards to their professional endeavors. Evidenced by a survey conducted by Wang et al.^[5] in 2022, a staggering 45% of teachers have scarcely, if ever, experienced contentment in relation to their vocation. Similarly, approximately 22% of teachers have infrequently or never encountered a sense of significance and purpose in their occupational pursuits, while an additional 22% have rarely, if ever, been consumed by a profound enthusiasm for their craft. Furthermore, nearly 29% of rural instructors have seldom or never been stirred by their labor, whereas approximately 35% have seldom or never experienced a profound sense of pride in their roles as pedagogues^[5].

Throughout the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, discernible disparities emerged between rural and urban students with regard to their engagement with e-learning. Notably, when contrasted with their economically privileged urban counterparts, rural students residing in China encountered palpable

impediments when participating in remote learning facilitated by electronic communication technologies^[8,9]. However, the intrinsic motivation of students in embracing e-learning holds the potential to galvanize their involvement, thus underscoring the indispensability of fostering positive attitudes towards internet-mediated education^[10]. Additionally, students' e-learning self-efficacy assumes paramount significance, with cultural capital exerting a salient influence. Urban students, who exhibit heightened acumen in harnessing computers for online learning, enjoy a distinct advantage over their rural counterparts in this particular sphere. Lastly, the provision of social support, encompassing assistance from educators and an auspicious learning milieu, exerts a favorable impact on e-learning outcomes.

As indicated in the “China rural education development report 2020–2022”^[11], the sphere of rural education in China grapples with a plethora of intricate impediments, primarily revolving around the establishment of a robust and all-encompassing rural education framework. The quality of rural education is profoundly influenced by an array of pivotal factors, including the educational experiences of rural parents, the professional competence of rural educators, the prevailing educational milieu in rural areas, and the physical well-being and nutritional status of rural children. These facets necessitate continual refinement, consolidation, and enhancement. However, the attainment of a cohesive consensus regarding appropriate educational concepts, methodologies, and models for rural education remains elusive, thereby necessitating proactive exploration and endeavors on the part of rural school administrators, teachers, and relevant stakeholders. The advancement of rural educational institutions and the elevation of educational standards within rural communities cannot solely rely on external stimuli, but must be underpinned by the cultivation of indigenous capabilities and an intrinsic impetus for development among rural education entities. Nevertheless, the pursuit of autonomous determination of suitable trajectories for educational reforms and progress by rural schools, based on their distinct circumstances, faces certain challenges that warrant meticulous deliberation^[11].

3. Review of literature

3.1. Teacher resilience

The significance of teacher resilience in preserving the unwavering dedication and fervor of educators within educational institutions has been firmly established through a myriad of empirical studies^[12]. As paragons of consummate professionals, endowed with unyielding commitment and a lofty ethical disposition, teachers possess potent subjective and affective motivations that sustain their enduring engagement with their vocation^[13]. The construct of teacher resilience encompasses their proactive restoration of physical and psychological fortitude in the face of adversity, their unwavering confidence and proficiency in pedagogical pursuits, the attainment of commendations through exceptional accomplishments, and the subsequent emotional nourishment derived from such triumphs^[14]. To cultivate and enhance the resilience and efficacy of teachers, an unwavering and indomitable sense of competence is indispensable^[15]. Moreover, teacher resilience is susceptible to the influence of diverse factors, encompassing their experiential repertoire, pedagogical values, the sociocultural and policy milieu of the teaching profession, as well as individual factors pertaining to the intricate interplay between their professional and personal lives, and the organizational milieu within which they operate^[16].

In accordance with extant scholarship, a holistic framework for fortifying teacher resilience has been posited (**Figure 1**), denoted as the “structural relationship of work conditions trust and teacher resilience” model^[17].

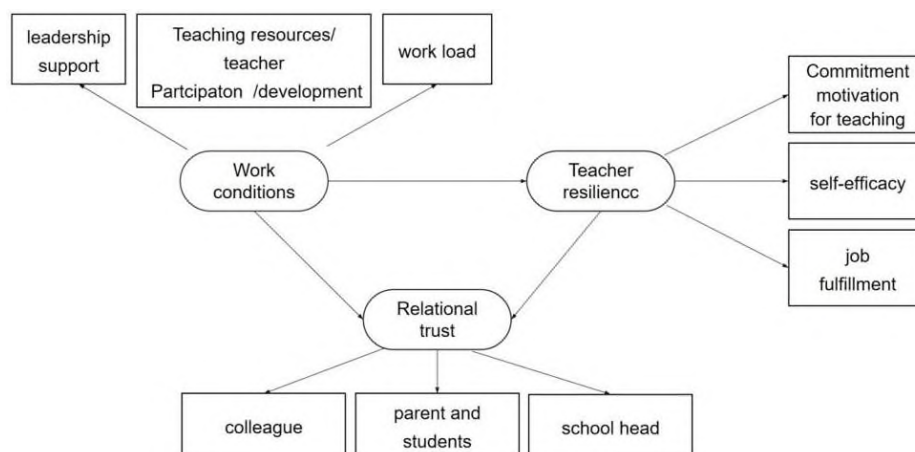


Figure 1. Teacher Resilience Structure Chart.

Illustrated in the diagram’s right panel, teacher resilience emanates from a tripartite array of subjective competencies, artfully organized into three distinct constituents: professional dedication and pedagogical drive serving as emotional reservoirs of resilience; self-efficacy functioning as a cognitive and sociocultural wellspring of resilience; and the contentment or fulfillment derived from their vocation as an emotive source of resilience. These three dimensions synergistically intertwine, empowering educators to sustain their fervor, allegiance, and sanguinity within the realm of their instructional calling^[17].

Work-related factors are delineated into three distinct dimensions: firstly, the managerial sphere encompasses facets such as leadership support; secondly, educational execution entails elements like the availability of educational resources and a proficient teaching cohort, as well as the degree of involvement in educational pursuits and developmental advancements; finally, workload represents an integral aspect. Amidst these occupational constituents, the interrelationships and trust dynamics existing between teachers and their colleagues, students and parents, as well as the level of acknowledgment demonstrated by school administrators, exert a pronounced influence on teachers’ sense of contentment, fulfillment in their pedagogical endeavors, and, ultimately, their fortitude in the face of challenges—their resilience as educators^[17].

In the aftermath of the pandemic’s repercussions, the realm of Chinese rural education finds itself in dire need of harnessing the potential of emergent educational forces to surmount adversities. The labor and subjective perspectives of rural educators assume paramount importance. Simultaneously, leaders in rural education must diligently foster teacher resilience in accordance with the aforementioned three dimensions. The key to propelling the advancement of rural education lies in the retention of educators and the cultivation of their resilience^[18]. Prioritizing factors such as the working milieu within rural schools and broader societal contexts, an astute comprehension of the circumstances confronting rural teachers, and a comprehensive analysis of the intrinsic and extrinsic circumstances and influences affecting the resilience of novice teachers is of utmost significance. Furthermore, rural education leaders ought to pay heed to the distinctive attributes and aptitudes of fledgling educators, discern their exigencies, and foster a sustainable educational milieu that safeguards their retention and growth^[12].

3.2. The situation of rural education in China

Viewed from a macro perspective, the educational achievements in China have witnessed substantial enhancement concomitant with the economic advancements catalyzed by the implementation of reform and opening-up policies. By 2019, the adult literacy rate in China has experienced a remarkable surge, escalating from 66% to 97%. Despite these notable advancements in the educational domain driven by economic policies, a conspicuous disparity in academic performance between urban and rural students continues to persist within

the Chinese educational landscape^[19]. Even at the primary school level, rural children in China exhibit a discernible lag in diverse educational outcomes compared to their urban counterparts^[20]. Extensive research indicates that this disparity transcends national boundaries, permeating within individual provinces as well^[19]. Moreover, these disparities in academic achievements also engender substantial disparities in educational attainment between urban and rural students.

3.3. The situation of rural teachers in China

Presently, a substantial proportion of educators, amounting to no less than 65%, are stationed in rural regions across China^[21]. As elucidated by the “China rural education development report 2020–2022”^[21], the latest available data from 2020 reveals a notable surge in the representation of young teachers under the age of 29 within the rural teaching workforce, constituting 22.2% of the entire cadre, surpassing their urban counterparts by 6.1 percentage points, thereby indicating a discernible trend toward a youthful teaching populace. Nonetheless, the issue of an aging rural teaching cohort remains alarmingly prominent, with educators aged 55 and above accounting for a significant 8.8% of the overall workforce. Additionally, an analysis of the national data indicates an average student-to-teacher ratio of merely 1.88:1 in rural primary schools, thus signaling an acute dearth of dedicated educators within these educational institutions. By extension, rural junior high schools experience an average student-to-teacher ratio of 4.52:1 nationwide. Furthermore, the likelihood of rural teachers attaining the esteemed first-level teacher designation, granted upon a decade of continuous service in compulsory education, stands at a meager 3.5%, considerably lower than the urban rate of 5.3%. Although the odds of both urban and rural teachers securing the first-level teacher title after twenty years of unwavering commitment remain comparable, a differentiation becomes evident when considering the probability of obtaining the aforementioned designation following thirty years of unbroken service, with rural teachers trailing at a mere 65.7%, indicative of a noteworthy shortfall of 13.7 percentage points compared to their urban counterparts.

Based on a survey conducted by Liu et al.^[18], it was revealed that in 2020, rural educators in China devoted an average of 53.35 h per week to their professional duties, surpassing their counterparts in county towns who worked for 48.7 h on average. Concerning financial remuneration, rural teachers received an average monthly salary after tax of ¥3930.6 (approximately £446), complemented by an average monthly bonus amounting to ¥476.6 (approximately £54). While the working hours of rural teachers can be regarded as generally reasonable, the supplementary bonus income exerts a certain motivational influence on their overall commitment. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the tasks that consume more time than instructional responsibilities pertain to the day-to-day administration and operational aspects of the school, at times surpassing the magnitude of individual instructional duties^[18].

In an exhaustive investigation conducted by Li et al.^[22], compelling empirical evidence has demonstrated the compounding array of impediments unleashed by the relentless onslaught of the pandemic within the sphere of rural education. Amidst this landscape, the burgeoning cohort of youthful rural educators finds themselves embroiled in an escalating whirlwind of pedagogical pressures and vocational aspirations, gradually eroding their once ardent dedication to the noble craft of teaching. It is noteworthy that several educators hailing from rural localities, devoid of prior exposure to the intricacies of online instruction, grapple with a formidable process of acclimatization to the exigencies of remote education, further exacerbated by a paucity of comprehensive training provisions aimed at fortifying their efficacy in this unprecedented domain^[23]. Despite valiant endeavors to implement a plethora of pedagogical interventions, including the advent of virtual instruction and the deployment of remote assignments, it remains an irrefutable verity that the far-reaching tendrils of the COVID-19 pandemic and its accompanying corpus of restrictive policies wield an indelible and substantive impact on the fragile edifice of student motivation and the overarching job satisfaction of their

rural mentors^[24].

3.4. The turnover tendency

Currently, the most formidable predicament confronting rural educational institutions in China lies in the attrition of their teaching staff, wherein instructors either migrate to urban schools or wholly relinquish their positions within the pedagogical realm. Egregiously, the departure of young educators from these rural establishments assumes an alarming magnitude, precipitating dire consequences^[25]. However, it is crucial to note that the dearth of youthful pedagogues in these rural schools is not an inherent dearth of human resources within the education sector; rather, it is a byproduct of the social ramifications stemming from the need for role adaptation and metamorphosis within these rural scholastic contexts. The protracted nature of this scarcity can be attributed to the profound cognitive, practical, and emotional conflicts encountered by educators during the intricate process of transitioning into their self-defined professional roles^[18].

Nonetheless, propelled by governmental incentives, graduates hailing from both standard and specialized tertiary institutions in China wholeheartedly engage in voluntary initiatives aimed at ameliorating rural education in destitute regions. A cohort of these altruistic individuals commits to educational support endeavors for extended periods of two years or beyond, driven by an ardent passion for pedagogy or a compassionate connection rooted in shared backgrounds^[26].

The vocation of teaching has perpetually entailed arduous physical and emotional requisites, necessitating a pronounced reservoir of resilience and fortitude^[27]. The scholastic accomplishments and growth of students directly impinge upon teachers' perception of efficacy and emotional well-being^[28]. Nevertheless, scant scholarly attention has been directed towards examining the subjective well-being and sense of affiliation experienced by rural educators^[29]. The conspicuous phenomenon of feminization in Chinese education is manifest, thereby endowing female cohorts with an acutely attuned perception of their emotional milieu^[18,30].

A recent study conducted in South Africa has shed light on the vulnerability of educators functioning in rural or underdeveloped areas to mental health challenges, stemming from a multitude of factors encompassing the pedagogical milieu, demanding work requirements, and the distinctive attributes of their students^[31]. The effective mitigation of these predicaments by educational leaders assumes pivotal importance in safeguarding the well-being and efficacy of teachers within these contexts.

Moreover, the factors contributing to the attrition of inexperienced rural teachers from rural schools encompass not only considerations related to future career prospects and the urban-rural wage gap but also encompass the educational prospects and advancement of their own children. These influential factors may foster a predisposition among novice rural teachers to relinquish their positions within the educational sphere after only a few years of service^[18]. The rural teacher initiative in China has consistently advocated for the involvement of university graduates in voluntary initiatives aimed at rural education, thereby bolstering the teaching workforce in rural areas. However, this endeavor has simultaneously expedited the migration of college students from rural environments to urban schools or alternative industries, driven by their acquired experience, policy incentives, and employment benefits^[32].

4. Findings

The literature synthesis segment presented a comprehensive overview of prior investigations pertaining to the resilience exhibited by rural teachers in China, encompassing aspects ranging from working conditions to relational trust, while further elaborating upon these themes. However, it is discernible that novice teachers encounter an amplified array of challenges with regard to fostering teacher resilience, and the critical breakthrough necessitates the focused attention and proactive measures undertaken by school leaders to

promote such resilience.

In accordance with the SWOT model, the ensuing **Table 1** can be concisely delineated.

Table 1. SWOT environmental analysis on the resilience of rural teachers.

Strengths:	Weaknesses:	Inside the rural school
1) Rural educators exhibit heightened levels of contentment towards rural education. 2) They experience an enhanced sense of accomplishment in their professional endeavors. 3) Their vocational trajectory encounters comparatively fewer obstacles and complexities. 4) Interpersonal dynamics within their work environment tend to be relatively uncomplicated.	1) Encountering challenges in fostering professional growth and advancement 2) Inadequate availability of pedagogical resources and instructional equipment 3) Burdensome workloads that impede effective teaching and comprehensive educational engagement 4) Insufficient attention to the educational development of teachers' own children 5) Disparities between students' educational experiences in on-campus and online learning modalities 6) Remuneration that falls below satisfactory levels, posing financial constraints 7) Limited access to health and mental well-being support services	
Opportunities:	Threats:	Outside the rural school
1) Policy backing and governmental support 2) Expeditious augmentation of novel resources 3) Advancement and proliferation of online educational platforms	1) Beneficiaries of policy advantages 2) Disparities in urban-rural development 3) Policies pertaining to epidemic containment 4) Societal perception and understanding	

The SWOT analysis conducted on the resilience of rural teachers presents an overview of the significant environmental factors that may impact novice teachers in rural educational settings, drawing upon relevant scholarly sources. This comprehensive examination serves as a valuable resource for rural education administrators, offering actionable insights to foster and fortify teacher resilience.

5. Discussion

The prevailing obstacles encountered by fledgling rural educators pertaining to resilience persevere as unambiguous and formidable within the prevailing milieu. Nonetheless, as regulatory constraints are gradually alleviated, a window of opportunity emerges for the reinvigoration of rural education. Drawing on the theoretical framework of teacher resilience postulated by Li et al.^[13] the ensuing discourse will concentrate on several dimensions encompassing teacher labor conditions, self-perception, pedagogical drive, occupational contentment, and interpersonal rapport. These trajectories endeavor to scrutinize the pragmatic requisites of novice instructors while accentuating pivotal considerations for leaders within the realm of rural education.

5.1. Educational motivation

It is an incontrovertible reality that notwithstanding the jeopardized well-being and safety concerns, as well as the regulatory constraints imposed on instruction and travel, rural educators who persistently exhibit unwavering commitment to rural education serve as the bedrock and epitomize the most resolute cohort in the advancement of China's rural educational landscape^[23]. Consequently, leaders within the sphere of rural education ought to prioritize the safeguarding of these educators and establish a cohesive community of teacher resources that resonates with the unique characteristics of rural education. By harnessing the expertise and ardent drive of these seasoned educators, they can assume leadership roles and act as mentors for neophyte teachers venturing onto the rural education frontlines in the post-pandemic era.

5.2. Self-perception of efficacy

The ascribed potency of teacher resilience is intrinsically linked to external factors, where it emerges from

a sense of accomplishment. Particularly for rural educators, the favorable progress exhibited by rural students functions as an influential and compelling form of affirmative validation for their endeavors. Over time, these rural teachers accrue self-assurance and proficiency in their instructional practices, continually reaping the rewards of this constructive feedback, thereby fostering a heightened sense of contentment and gratification in their unwavering commitment to the pedagogical vocation. Consequently, their resilience as educators is augmented, amplifying their ability to persevere and thrive in the face of challenges^[12].

5.3. Job fulfillment

The criteria utilized for appraising the attainment of the first-level teacher title in China are predicated upon various factors. These include the pedagogue's pedagogical prowess, a profound grounding in theoretical and professional knowledge, autonomous command of prescribed curricula, teaching materials, instructional principles, and pedagogical approaches tailored to the subjects they teach. Teachers are expected to competently impart moral education in accordance with the age-related characteristics and learning capacities of their students. An instrumental metric for assessing teachers' instructional efficacy rests upon the performance, accolades, and ongoing educational pursuits of their pupils^[33]. Regrettably, this constitutes a formidable "final obstacle" that impedes the advancement of rural educators. The teacher title system in China exerts a direct influence on their remuneration and societal standing. The enduring growth of rural teachers may be inextricably intertwined with rural settings; however, obtaining an elevated professional title can meaningfully enhance their livelihoods and social esteem. Unfortunately, the data gleaned from the rural education report 2020–2022^[21] portrays a less sanguine panorama concerning the acquisition of professional titles among rural teachers. Consequently, rural educators must establish long-term objectives within their professional trajectory, with securing a professional title emerging as a singularly paramount aspiration.

5.4. Work conditions

The emergence of the pandemic has expedited the assimilation of digital technology and online learning platforms into the educational landscape. In light of this phenomenon, rural education leaders possess the capacity to harness the transformative potential of these technological advancements to formulate comprehensive strategies and initiatives aimed at fortifying the resilience of fledgling rural teachers^[24]. Stringent travel constraints have compelled educational institutions, including governmental bodies and rural schools, to invest in state-of-the-art technological infrastructure and digital resources. Consequently, rural schools are presented with a unique opportunity to bridge the educational divide that exists between urban and rural areas by equipping their students with access to premier online resources and remote learning opportunities. Through the utilization of telecommunications technology, innovative pedagogical materials can surmount the spatial barriers that afflict exceedingly deprived regions, thus reaching the desks of eligible students^[34]. Gradually, pedagogical methodologies employed in rural areas will converge with those practiced in urban settings, yielding mutual benefits for both students and teachers. Rural students can augment their academic performance by capitalizing on the abundance of enriched resources, while teachers can derive profound gratification and accomplishment from witnessing the progress of their pupils. Furthermore, teachers are no longer confined to a singular instructional approach, fostering a propitious environment for their professional growth and development^[23,35].

It is noteworthy to highlight that the once insular nature of the rural education milieu has undergone a significant transformation due to the advent of information software. This technological advancement has effectively opened up new avenues for rural teachers to engage with the wealth of educational resources available in urban areas, thereby broadening their horizons and facilitating their professional growth. This paradigm shift has engendered opportunities for the establishment of vibrant communities of learning,

fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange among teachers across diverse schools and even geographical boundaries^[23,36].

5.5. Relationship and trust

When urban university graduates or fledgling educators embark on their journey in rural schools, they are confronted with the prospect of encountering communication barriers with students and parents, stemming from linguistic variations and misinterpretations. These challenges, in turn, contribute to heightened social pressures and complexities for novice teachers, intensifying their professional difficulties^[35]. Within the realm of rural education, teachers are often compelled to assume multifarious roles, encompassing instructional responsibilities, administrative duties, and even unforeseen tasks, such as attending to students' familial matters or addressing their dining-related predicaments^[18]. Amidst such formidable pressures, the provision of support from family members, friends, colleagues, and superiors can significantly fortify an individual's capacity to withstand stressors and adversities^[37]. Engaging in various activities, such as interactive classroom sessions, scholarly seminars, and local cultural gatherings within the school milieu, can effectively alleviate the burden of communication apprehension borne by novice teachers^[18]. By fostering robust collegial relationships, novice teachers can surmount barriers and cultivate a profound sense of belonging in their professional endeavors.

6. Conclusion

In the realm of Chinese rural education, educators encounter a myriad of multifaceted challenges, wherein they grapple with a dearth of resources, including inadequate infrastructure, insufficiency in teaching materials, and limited access to technological advancements. Furthermore, they contend with remunerative and benefit disparities vis-à-vis their urban counterparts, compounded by the formidable burden of a voluminous workload necessitated by their dual role as instructors of diverse subjects and overseers of large class sizes. The geographical remoteness of rural school establishments engenders a pervasive sense of seclusion among teachers, fostering an environment bereft of ample opportunities for professional development and a conspicuous dearth of support networks, thereby significantly hindering the recruitment and retention of highly qualified educators in these regions.

In the wake of the post-epidemic era, the indelible imprint of the pandemic on rural education in China becomes unmistakably apparent. The reverberations of COVID-19 have cast a formidable shadow, intensifying preexisting challenges. The closure of schools and the precipitous transition to online learning have disproportionately hindered students' access to education, while both teachers and students have wrestled with elevated levels of stress and anxiety in the face of adversity. Consequently, it is imperative to prioritize their mental well-being and holistic welfare as we navigate the uncharted territory of the post-pandemic phase.

However, the current landscape also serves as a catalyst for rural education leaders to embark on transformative measures aimed at fortifying teacher resilience. This entails harnessing the vast array of online resources and adopting targeted instructional strategies to address the learning disparities that emerged during the pandemic, thereby providing tailored remedial support to students who may have encountered setbacks. The post-pandemic recovery phase necessitates the development of innovative teaching and training frameworks, tailored to the evolving educational landscape, to invigorate teachers' sense of accomplishment and self-efficacy. By implementing holistic support programs, attentiveness to the mental well-being and welfare of students and teachers alike can be assured, engendering a nurturing and supportive learning milieu. Ensuring a conducive work environment that nurtures and safeguards fledgling rural teachers assumes utmost significance. At a broader societal level, fostering collaborative alliances between rural schools, urban

institutions, and governmental agencies fosters a symbiotic exchange of best practices, enables the cross-pollination of ideas, and provides supplementary resources and assistance. Facilitating workshops and mentorship initiatives serves as a catalyst for the professional growth and development of rural educators, alleviating the inherent sense of isolation. It is crucial to effectuate substantive improvements in the remuneration and benefits extended to rural teachers, as this plays a pivotal role in attracting and retaining proficient and motivated education professionals.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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