

Post-Pandemic Teaching: More Isolated or More Collaboration?

Seoyeon Park, Ph.D. (University of Nevada, Las Vegas), seoyeon.park@unlv.edu

Sohee Kim, Ph.D. (University of South Alabama), skim@southalabama.edu

INTRODUCTION & AIM

COVID-19 substantially disrupted teachers' work by increasing instructional demands, accelerating digital adaptation, and changing everyday professional routines. Prior research suggests that these changes intensified teachers' workload and stress, while also creating new needs for professional learning and collaboration. However, it remains unclear whether the **post-pandemic teaching environment made teachers more professionally isolated or whether collaboration among teachers became stronger** as they responded to shared instructional challenges. Understanding this shift is important because professional collaboration may function as an organizational resource that supports teacher well-being, particularly when workload and stress are high. This study uses TALIS 2018 and TALIS 2024 to examine how teachers' professional learning, collaboration, workload, and well-being changed from the pre-pandemic to post-pandemic period. It also investigates whether the relationships among collaboration, workload, and teacher well-being changed across the two survey cycles.

Research Questions

1. How did teachers' professional collaboration, workload, and well-being change from 2018 to 2024?
2. Did teachers become more isolated or more collaborative after COVID-19?
3. Did the relationship among collaboration, workload, and well-being change between TALIS 2018 and 2024?

METHOD

Data Source

This study uses teacher-level data from the **OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018 and 2024**. These two survey cycles allow comparison between pre-pandemic and post-pandemic teaching contexts.

Key Constructs

- **Professional learning:** teachers' participation in professional development and learning opportunities
- **Professional collaboration:** teachers' collaboration with colleagues, including sharing materials, team teaching, and joint professional activities
- **Workload:** teachers' perceived workload and work-related demands
- **Teacher well-being:** teachers' job satisfaction and/or intention to leave the profession

Analytic Approach

1. **Differences** between TALIS 2018 and TALIS 2024
2. **Multi-group structural equation model** to examine the relationships among professional collaboration, workload, and teacher well-being.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Professional learning participation

"Did teachers' participation in PL change between 2018 & 2024?"
→ **YES**. Out of 6 activities, 5 showed statistically significant shifts ($p < .001$.)

- 📈 **Significant INCREASE:** The Rise of Flexible & Accessible Learning Courses / Seminars, Online Courses
- 📉 **Significant DECREASE:** Decline in Long-term & Collaborative Learning Qualification Programmes, Teacher Networks

Collaboration

"Did teachers' engagement in collaboration change between 2018 & 2024?"
→ **YES**. Significant changes were observed in 6 out of 7 collaborative activities.

- 📈 **Significant INCREASE:** collaborative professional learning
- 📉 **Significant DECREASE:** Traditional classroom-level/in-person collaborations—such as Class Observations/Feedback, Discussions on learning development, and Joint Team Teaching

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Workload

"Did teachers' working hours and workload tasks change between 2018 & 2024?"
→ **YES**. Every single workload dimension measured showed a statistically highly significant change across the two survey cycles.

📉 **Universal Reduction in Working Hours:** There is a definitive, dramatic drop in the absolute number of hours teachers spent on every aspect of their job.

🕒 **Core Teaching vs. Administrative Relief:** Total work hours and direct teaching hours decreased by approximately 20 hours on average.

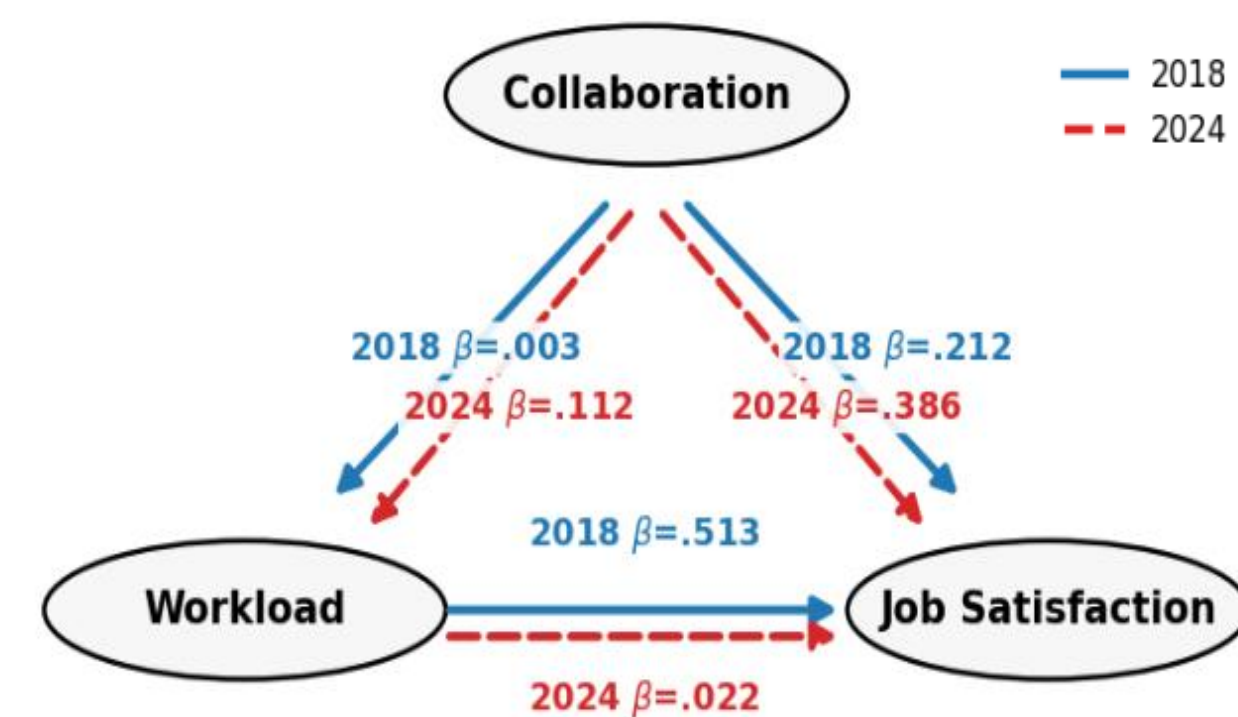
Job Satisfaction

"Did teachers' job satisfaction change significantly between 2018 & 2024?"
→ **YES**. Every single item measuring job satisfaction showed a statistically highly significant change across the two survey cycles.

📉 **Widespread Decline in Overall Job Satisfaction:** Across all baseline satisfaction questions, scores dropped noticeably from 2018 to 2024.

📉 **Erosion of Professional Status:** The belief that "the teaching profession is valued in society" took one of the hardest hits

🔄 **Nuance in Reverse-Coded Items:** Teachers felt more regret about entering the field in 2024 than in 2018.



PARADIGM SHIFT: Workload Losing Its Grip

- 2018: Workload was the dominant driver of satisfaction ($\beta = 0.513$)
- 2024: Its impact virtually vanished ($\beta = 0.022$)
- 💡 Insight: Post-pandemic employees care less about "HOW MUCH" they work, and more about "HOW FLEXIBLY" and "HOW AUTONOMOUSLY" they work.

THE RISE OF CONNECTION: Collaboration Takes Center Stage

- Direct impact of Collaboration on Job Satisfaction nearly DOUBLED!
[2018: $\beta = 0.212$] ——— (Pandemic Isolation) ———> [2024: $\beta = 0.386$]
- 💡 Insight: Shared experiences of pandemic isolation have dramatically heightened the psychological and professional value of workplace connections.

MODERN REALITY: The "Communication Cost"

- In 2024, smoother collaboration slightly increased perceived workload ($\beta = 0.112$).
- 💡 Insight: Reflects modern workplace fatigues (e.g., Slack/Zoom overload). In hybrid setups, the process of aligning with peers becomes a task itself.

MECHANISM: Independent Parallel Paths

- The mediation effect was statistically significant but practically negligible ($\beta = 0.001$).
- 💡 Insight: Collaboration and Workload act as parallel, distinct tracks to satisfaction, rather than a sequential chain reaction.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

💡 **Beyond "Workload Control":** Reducing work hours or tasks (2018-style strategy) is no longer sufficient to retain and satisfy modern employees.

💡 **Cultivate Connection:** Organizations must actively invest in high-quality collaboration systems and team bonding to directly boost morale.

💡 **Optimize Communication Cost:** Streamline digital collaboration tools to prevent social interactions from turning into additional task burdens.