From Global Goals to Classroom Realities: The Role of Corporate Social Responsibility in Promoting Teacher Wellbeing in Higher Education

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Abstract: Concerning the influence of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on teacher wellbeing within the higher education sector in China, this study is a synthesis of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs) for a broader understanding of the concept. By using structural equation modeling, this study investigates how CSR initiatives influence teachers by mediating the roles of educational institute culture and teacher admiration, with affective commitment as the moderator. The findings show that CSR endeavors provide direct payoff for teachers’ mental health and indirect payoff through a positive educational institution culture and teacher admiration. The role of affective commitment as a moderator is confirmed in the CSR–teacher admiration–wellbeing pathway. This research, therefore, shows that educational institutions have great potential to strategically align CSR with the UN-SDGs, not only for the benefit of teachers but also for the other sustainable development goals. This study therefore emphasizes the doubled role of educational institutes to make the lives of their staff better and to contribute to the global agenda of sustainable development by well-executed CSR initiatives.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility; teacher wellbeing; higher education; educational institute culture; teacher admiration; affective commitment; sustainable development goals

1. Introduction

There is growing understanding that employee well-being is the key antecedent of individual and organizational performance [1,2]. An enhanced feeling of well-being at work will provide positive impacts on the satisfaction and productivity of employees, in addition to lowering the rate of healthcare cost and turnover, guaranteeing a sound and long-lasting organizational culture. In the context of the educational domain, one of the most significant problems is teacher welfare. There is no doubt that it is one of the greatest indicators that defines the quality of education and the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes and, therefore, is important for the effective management of sustainable education [3]. The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs) are a crucial framework of goals for managing and achieving socio-economic and environmental agendas worldwide [4]. Targets such as quality education (SDG4), good health and wellbeing (SDG3), and decent work and economic growth (SDG8) are a reflection of the teacher wellbeing context [5]. Such goals emphasize the importance of achieving and sustaining a healthy work environment and promoting professional development, primarily in higher education institutions. Foreseeing an environment that is aligned with the aforementioned goals, educational institutions can make a significant input to achieving further global objectives by ensuring the positive status of teacher wellbeing and, in turn, the quality of education from the perspective of the SDGs.

It is now well understood that different aspects of an organization, such as leader-
ship, work environment, and training opportunities for employees, contribute positively to employee health [6,7]. Subsequently, extending it to corporate social responsibility (CSR), which is based on ethical principles and social norms [8], becomes crucial in the educational sector in particular, in which the wellbeing of teachers as a sustainability index becomes important [3,9]. This study discusses how CSR can help foster ethical behavior and social responsibilities in educational institutions, which can lead to improved teacher performance and satisfaction. This, in turn, is closely linked to teacher wellbeing, as is supported by the existing literature, which highlights the positive correlations between job satisfaction, performance, and overall wellbeing [10,11]. This research aims to develop a dual mediation model of the relationship between CSR and teacher wellbeing through educational institute culture and teacher admiration. Furthermore, this study explains how affective commitment might moderate these paths.

The higher education sector in China provides a particularly special context for this research, especially when considering it on a global scale and in line with the UN-SDGs [12]. As one of the largest and the most dynamic education systems in the world [13], the higher education sector in China has a great effect on global education and its trends. Universities in China have successively incorporated CSR into their management system to meet the requirements of government policies and social demands. Compared with their Western counterparts, Chinese educational institutions place more stress on collectivism and social order, which are derived from cultural values. Such initiatives include environmental sustainability, community engagement, and inclusive education [14]. Even though the concept of CSR and the wellbeing of employees have been researched quite extensively in for-profit environments, higher education institutions are structured differently. Education institutions are mainly concerned with services, more so in the formation of social utility as opposed to commercial worth. While for-profits aim to achieve financial value for their shareholders, higher education institutions are more concerned with social value and with the welfare of their employees and learners. This essential divergence requires a separate conception of CSR with an emphasis on ethicality, community participation, and educator welfare. In the context of higher education, CSR strategies aim to create a supportive educational climate that contributes to teacher satisfaction and personal development. They also help teachers while, at the same time, supporting the objective of the institution to produce quality results. It is crucial to acknowledge that catering to the needs of staff in educational facilities can lead to the development of a sustainable educational system that can support global sustainability goals.

CSR in Chinese education management is mandated by both governmental policies and cultural values that promote the objectives of collective welfare and orderliness. These practices are aimed at promoting the supportive and ethical context of work, which contributes to the achievement of the goals of sustainable development. The implementation of CSR into the core values and activities of Chinese universities not only serves the purpose of promoting the institutional image but also positively impacts the wellbeing of the teachers and the quality of education in Chinese universities. Hence, the integration of CSR into the management of higher education institutions in China is intended to enhance ethical conduct, the community, and sustainable development, which conforms to the UN-SDGs. The CSR activities in Chinese universities have been growing through different programs, including community service and environmentally sustainable programs, as well as the inclusion of deprived segments of the community in learning institutions. All of these activities are not only aimed at improving the image of the institution but also the quality of life for employees and learners. Thus, by integrating CSR into a company’s values, Chinese universities develop pedagogical conditions for teacher satisfaction and personal development. The evaluation of the influence of CSR on teacher welfare within the given context goes in line with Goal 4 (quality education) of the UN-SDGs. Moreover, it helps to formulate the educational practices that contribute to the sustainable development of education at the global level. Furthermore, China’s unique socio-economic system and the fact integration of CSR into education management provide a very valuable oppor-
Sustainability 2024, 16, 6815

sustainability is commonly integrated into corporate strategies under which CSR most effectively enhances employee outcomes. This approach not only deepens the understanding of how CSR can affect employee psychology but also provides insights into the organizational conditions under which CSR most effectively enhances employee outcomes.

Another overlooked area in current studies is the role of specific mediating variables such as employee admiration and educational institute culture within the context of CSR and wellbeing relationship, especially in the education sector. Most existing studies broadly address the direct impacts of CSR without exploring the psychological mechanisms or institutional contexts that may mediate these effects [17,18]. This research addresses this gap by proposing a dual mediation model that explores how employee admiration for CSR practices and the prevailing culture within educational institutions influence the relationship between CSR and teacher wellbeing. This approach not only deepens the understanding of how CSR can affect employee psychology but also provides insights into the organizational conditions under which CSR most effectively enhances employee outcomes.

Moreover, the role of affective commitment as a moderating variable in the association between CSR and wellbeing in the educational sector has not been given due attention. It is precisely the fact that the vast majority of the research in the area of education has mainly centered on the general workforce and has ignored the distinctive emotional and professional characteristics of the teaching profession. This research aims to fill the critical knowledge gap with regard to the role of affective commitment among teachers in modifying the relationship between CSR and wellbeing. Affective commitment is defined as the emotional bonds, identification, and engagement that an employee has for his/her organization [19]. A considerable amount of research has been conducted on this concept in organizational behavior and psychology, and it has been found that affective commitment has a significant and positive relationship with positive work behaviors, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions [20,21]. In the case of educational organizations, the affective commitment of teachers leads to a positive response to any organizational activity, including CSR activities [22]. A study [23] has established that affective commitment may interact with the organizational practices and outcomes of employees. For instance, affective commitment is related to the better and quicker reception of organizational support and development measures, which in turn increases job performance and employee wellbeing [24]. This implies that affective commitment can enhance the favorable relationship between CSR and teacher wellbeing since it involves an emotional attachment to the organization’s ideals and actions. The addition of this moderating variable in this research provides a more complex model of how the interactions of some factors influence teachers’ wellbeing. As a result, policymakers and educational leaders can produce more informed recommendations when thinking about the implementation of CSR strategies that are both effective and emotionally resonant with educators. By offering such subtler insights, CSR programs have a better chance of being in compliance with global standards, like the UN-SDGs, and of being more deeply embedded into the local cultural and institutional fabric.

Missing in the existing research is also the relevance and use of the UN-SDGs within the framework of CSR in education and how it addresses teacher wellbeing promotion. The SDGs are commonly integrated into corporate strategies [16], but the application of SDGs...
in educational settings, specifically in the context of CSR initiatives—which are intended to improve teacher wellbeing—is rarely studied. This discrepancy is the most evident in the case of the SDGs that directly related education and health, like quality education (Goal 4) and good health and wellbeing (Goal 3). This research intends to bridge this gap by explicitly connecting the dots between CSR initiatives in higher education and their alignment with specific SDGs, thereby exploring how these global objectives can be operationalized within educational institutions to enhance teacher wellbeing.

This study is not only a step towards a more sustainable approach to educational management but also a theoretical and practical contribution to understanding how educational institutions can integrate CSR in their operations to meet international sustainability standards. This perspective stresses the pivotal role of educational institutions in wider sustainability objectives by making this a model for other sectors and regions. With this research, this study aims to produce a broader interpretation of CSR’s role in education that goes beyond mere compliance and moves towards transformative impact that is in line with global sustainability efforts. Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework of this research.

Figure 1. The hypothesized framework of this research.

2. Literature Review

The idea of CSR in business is all about how a company can manage its processes in such a way that the result will be a net good to society [25,26]. In line with Dahlsrud [27], CSR is explained as “how companies earn their commercial success in a way that complements ethical values and respects people, communities, and the environment”. This definition speaks to the complexity of CSR, which integrates social, ethical, and environmental issues into business operations. Similarly, employee wellbeing can be referred to as an assessment of the degree to which people accept their jobs as meaningful and good, as defined by Warr [28]. This includes, but is not limited to, the sense of job satis-
faction, mental and physical health, and finding self-fulfillment [29]. In the context of CSR, research shows that CSR initiatives can positively affect the wellbeing of employees by promoting an enhanced sense of purpose, job satisfaction, pride in the workplace, and improving health outcomes [30]. The major driver is that workers feel more connected to the company’s philosophy when CSR initiatives create a more ethical workplace, and this subsequently leads to the strengthening of employees’ engagement and satisfaction [31]. The effect of CSR on employee wellbeing is more obvious in education management. Educational institutions that have CSR initiatives usually report better staff morale and retention, which is a key requirement to ensure the effective and consistent delivery of educational services [32]. In this sort of milieu, CSR initiatives can consist of offering career growth opportunities, creation of a culture that is pro-inclusion and supportive to the staff, and community and environmental stewardship, which, in the long-term, contributes to the wellbeing of the staff.

As for the theoretical background of this study, the study chooses social exchange theory (SET), which was first provided by Homans [33]. According to SET, it is social interaction that makes people behave the way they do, and this is achieved by the exchange process through which individuals try to optimize benefits and minimize costs. This theory aligns well with this research’s context, as it can elucidate the reciprocal relationship between educational institutions and their teachers; institutions engage in CSR practices, and, in return, teachers may exhibit higher levels of wellbeing, commitment, and job satisfaction. This model contributes to the identification of the ecosystem of CSR initiatives and employees’ reactions within the educational setting. Based on this theoretical backdrop, the first hypothesis is formulated as follows:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1).** CSR initiatives are positively related to employee wellbeing in the higher education sector.

The concept of CSR is gradually gaining importance as an important driver of organizational culture and performance, especially in the education sector [34]. As pointed out by Schein [35], organizational culture is a system of values, norms, and activities that provide an idea about the organizational functioning and regulation of relations between members. CSR activities can lead to improvement and the promotion of diversity, as well as the integrity and engagement of higher institutions [32]. Prior studies have shown that CSR affects organizational culture through the integration of sustainability and ethical principles into an organization’s mission and functioning. This integration helps to consolidate the identity of the institution and makes it more attractive for both staff and students [36].

Culture plays a vital role in improving teacher wellbeing, as it has a great impact on the educational institute’s working environment [37]. Research shows that teachers with positive and supportive organizational environments are more satisfied with their job, experience less stress, and have a high level of professional accomplishment [38]. Such cultures are fostered by good leadership, communication, and compliance with the institutional culture. Thus, when the work climate is perceived as supportive and ethically sound and when the teachers’ professional self-positions match the objectives of the work environment, teachers’ engagement and satisfaction increase, which in turn enhances their wellbeing. This means that institutional culture is linked to the quality of teachers’ daily experiences based on motivation, stress, and satisfaction [39].

It was also confirmed that CSR has an indirect positive effect on teachers’ wellbeing, and the educational institute’s culture mediates the relationship between CSR and teachers’ wellbeing [40]. This mediation model assumes that CSR impacts organizational culture and that the latter affects teacher welfare. Thus, CSR projects can contribute to the formation of ethical norms of behavior and the creation of the initial framework for ethical actions and community cooperation, and the promotion of these values within the organizational culture improves teacher wellbeing [41]. This mediated pathway stresses the role of organizational culture as a mediator that acculturates and transmits the ethical values embraced by
CSR and enhances people’s lives and satisfaction, especially teachers [41]. Thus, educational institutions can successfully connect CSR practices with the improvement of their employees’ needs and expectations by providing and valuing such matters. From the lens of SET, these assumptions underscore a mutual exchange process where CSR is employed to enrich the organizational culture in response to which teacher wellbeing is promoted. SET posits that these exchanges are trust, loyalty, and reciprocal benefits; the change in an organization through CSR results in the enhancement of teachers engagement and satisfaction, creating a supportive and sustainable environment for teaching [42]. This theory assists in explaining the process through which these positive exchanges occur, strengthening the notion that positive relationships within institutions will translate to benefits for all the players involved. Hence, the following hypotheses are set:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). CSR initiatives positively influence the educational institute’s culture.

Hypothesis 3 (H3). A positive culture within educational institutions enhances teacher wellbeing.

Hypothesis 4 (H4). An educational institute’s culture mediates the relationship between CSR initiatives and teacher wellbeing, such that the impact of CSR on teacher wellbeing is channeled through improvements in organizational culture.

Employee admiration may be defined as the level of esteem or the level of respect employees have for the organization [43], especially in regard to the ethical and the social responsibilities that the organization takes. Although it is not a concept that has been classified scientifically, it has recently been embraced in organizational psychology [44] and in the CSR literature due to its ability to improve or advance employee interest [45]. Admiration of an institution encourages individuals to have a sense of ownership and dedication, and these two factors are essential for the wellbeing of employees. In the context of higher education, teacher admiration is especially relevant. When an institution is viewed by teachers as ethical and socially responsible, the teachers are likely to have improved wellbeing and job satisfaction. This element also helps to reduce stress, emotional burnout, and other negative phenomena that are detrimental to the recognition and development of an effective educational environment.

The CSR activities of educational institutions play a significant role in boosting employee admiration [46]. This admiration is due to the fact that employees have high regard for an organization due to the ethical and social responsibilities that the organization deploys [46]. Research suggests that participating in CSR projects whereby employees consider them consistent with their personal ethos and the public interest usually enhances employees’ positive organizational identification and organizational pride [47,48]. This effect is more pronounced for teachers, as the occupation of a teacher constantly evokes such values as care, honesty, and devotion to the public good. When educational institutions align these values with actual CSR activities like community support, environmental conservation, or positive employee treatment, in addition to enhancing confidence in the institution’s ethical stance, teacher recognition/engagement is also boosted [49]. Thus, factors such as enhanced self-respect and pride in an institution contribute greatly to the extent that teachers are willing to make deep emotional investments in their institutions.

Teacher admiration, which arises from CSR activities in an educational institute, results in wellbeing increases among teachers [46]. Admiration for an organization has a positive impact on employees’ affective organizational commitment, reduces their levels of stress, and increases job satisfaction [50]. When educators have a positive attitude towards their institution, they feel that they are part of a team, which makes them feel admired, hence enhancing their psychological wellbeing. This respect enhances their morale and makes them feel part of the institution and with clear identification. Positive emotions of admiration have been associated with decreased burnout rates and enhanced vitality and motivation, which are components of subjective wellbeing [51]. Therefore,
the link between teacher admiration and wellbeing shows that a positive attitude towards the place where one works positively affects job satisfaction and health.

Another important aspect is the mediating effect of teacher admiration in the context of the influence of CSR initiatives on teacher wellbeing. This mediation suggests that CSR activities affect wellbeing not only directly but also through affective and psychologic responses in the target group, namely, teachers [52,53]. This mediation provides evidence for the psychological factor that is admiration as a mediator of the relationship between CSR and wellbeing. It argues that CSR activities lead to admiration, and this, in turn, increases wellbeing. Hence, the extent to which CSR leads to teacher wellbeing would be contingent on the ability of CSR to elicit positive affective reactions from teachers. This emotional connection proves CSR’s effectiveness in improving support and fostering better working conditions, thus promoting psychological wellbeing and job satisfaction among teachers.

From the perspective of SET, these hypotheses illustrate the reciprocal exchange between educational institutions and teachers; since institutions offer CSR activities that reflect social and ethical causes, teachers then form attachment and adopt the institutions. This exchange is therefore healthy and developmentally beneficial for teachers, shaping a work environment that embraces social/ethical norms. According to SET, there is reciprocation between institutions’ investment in CSR, where, through psychological and emotional effects, positive values are returned which leads to a more effective and supportive educational environment. Hence, the following hypotheses are set:

**Hypothesis 5 (H5).** CSR initiatives positively influence teacher admiration in educational institutions.

**Hypothesis 6 (H6).** Teacher admiration positively impacts teacher wellbeing.

**Hypothesis 7 (H7).** Teacher admiration mediates the relationship between CSR initiatives and teacher wellbeing, enhancing the impact of CSR on wellbeing through positive emotional connections.

Affective commitment has been shown to correlate strongly with a range of positive employee outcomes [54,55]. Employees with high affective commitment are more likely to exhibit higher job satisfaction, reduced turnover intentions, and enhanced performance. This enhanced commitment reflects the emotional bonds employees feel towards their organization, which motivates them to continue employment and contribute positively to organizational goals [56]. The strength of these emotional bonds can significantly influence how employees perceive organizational initiatives and their personal investment in organizational success, thereby impacting their overall job satisfaction and wellbeing.

The moderation of affective commitment in the mediated pathway from CSR to teacher wellbeing through the educational institution culture plays a vital role here. It implies that the degree of affective commitment probably determines the outcome of CSR on teachers’ wellbeing by way of cultural changes at the workplace [57]. In particular, teachers with high affective commitment might perceive the benefits of the cultural changes as more important, and, consequently, they will experience more improvements in their wellbeing than teachers with lower commitment [58]. This means that the affective commitment can enhance the positive aspects of a supportive organizational culture that is oriented on ethical issues, and this will in turn strengthen the effectiveness of CSR programs in empowering highly committed teachers [59].

Likewise, affective commitment functions as a critical factor that further strengthens the relationship between CSR and teacher wellbeing in the pathway mediated by teacher admiration. Teachers with strong affective commitment are likely to envision CSR initiatives more positively, which in turn may create more appreciation for their institutions. Such a strong bond can, in turn, yield better results of wellbeing than just the causal relationship between a sports fandom and general happiness [60]. The hypothesis here is that the affective commit-
ment enhances the capability of CSR to bring about individual wellbeing through admiration; hence, it acts as a catalyst that multiplies the outcomes of CSR programs.

From the SET perspective, these hypotheses draw attention to the importance of emotional investments in the exchange relationship between companies and their employees. Affection toward work can be viewed as the emotional resource that employees use when they are being integrated into the process of mutual exchange [42]. Organizations can achieve increased commitment among employees who have high affective commitment by investing in CSR projects that address culture and feelings of admiration. This increased engagement undoubtedly reinforces the mutual nature of the exchange, which ultimately results in a stronger and more beneficial relationship for both parties.

**Hypothesis 8 (H8).** Affective commitment moderates the mediated paths between CSR and teachers’ wellbeing via educational institute culture (a) and via teacher admiration (b).

### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. Participants and Procedure

This current study targeted prominent cities across China, such as Chengdu, Xi’an, and Nanjing, chosen for their substantial academic institutions that are pioneers in integrating CSR practices. These institutions were selected based on their public sustainability reports and documented CSR activities accessible through official websites and press releases, confirming their active engagement in CSR. The data collection process commenced by directly approaching these educational institutions to survey their teaching staff. This current research effectively communicated the study’s purpose and assured confidentiality and anonymity to all participants to ensure a good response rate. To counter potential challenges like social desirability bias, recall bias, method bias, and respondent fatigue, this study employed a three-wave data collection strategy, with each wave spaced two weeks apart. In the first wave of data collection (T1), this study measured CSR and affective commitment (AC). This current research then continued with the second wave (T2) two weeks later and obtained the data on two factors, educational institute culture (EIC) and teacher admiration (TA). At the end of the third wave (T3), i.e., two weeks after T2, teacher wellbeing (TW) was measured. While social desirability bias cannot be fully addressed by this method, temporal separation helps in reducing the likelihood of inflated correlations due to common method variance. This approach allows for the separation of independent, mediating, and dependent variables over time, thus mitigating common method bias and improving causal inferences [61–63]. The same participants responded to all three waves of data collection. Each participant was assigned a unique identifier to track their responses across the three waves, ensuring that the data collected at different times were from the same individuals. This study considered the common organizational affiliation of the respondents. Specifically, this study controlled for institutional differences by including fixed effects for each educational institution in statistical models. This approach accounted for variations in CSR initiatives and educational institution culture across different universities, ensuring that the results reflected genuine relationships between the variables rather than institution-specific effects.

The study relied on G-Power version 3.1.9, which is a commonly used software for estimating the required sample size, to determine the sample size needed to gain adequate power for this study. This procedure provides direct calculations based on the expected effect sizes, alpha error probability, and power. Based on the preliminary tests, the set of assumptions, and the complexity of the model (including multiple mediators and moderators), a sample size of around 400 was calculated to be enough to detect statistically significant effects with sufficient power. Taking into account the normally low response rates of the survey research, this study initially distributed 600 questionnaires among the teachers from the selected educational institutions. Upon completion of the three-wave data collection process, 447 respondents provided us with their completed questionnaires. After data quality control to confirm accuracy and consistency, this study found that 419 questionnaires were valid for the final analysis. To achieve a high partic-
ipation rate, the principal investigator remained present during the data collection process, engaging directly with potential participants and answering any questions they had. This personal engagement helped build trust and encouraged participation. Additionally, the author’s affiliation with the education sector and established professional relationships within these institutions facilitated cooperation from the staff. These measures were crucial in ensuring a robust response rate and the validity of our findings.

3.2. Measures

This study utilized adapted scales from various published sources to measure the variables, which was crucial to ensure the reliability and contextual relevance of the measures. The questionnaire was based on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”), to capture the perceptions and attitudes of the participants clearly and effectively. Data were collected using a paper-pencil method to facilitate ease of distribution and completion by participants in their respective educational settings. This study measured employees’ perceptions of CSR activities using 15 items taken from the study of Mascarenhas, et al. [36], including the sample item “Environmental issues are an integral part of my educational institute’s strategy”. TW was measured using 18 items adapted from Zheng, et al. [64], who assessed teachers’ satisfaction and psychological experiences. A sample item from this scale was “In general, I feel fairly satisfied with my present job”. EIC was measured using 8 items from Tsui, et al. [65]. A sample item included “My educational institute focuses on developing employees’ potential”. TA was measured with five items taken from the study of Sweetman, et al. [66] that reflected the respect and esteem teachers hold for their institution. A sample item from this scale is “I respect my educational institute”. AC was assessed using 5 items, including the sample item “I would be happy to spend my career with this educational institute”, adapted from Allen and Meyer [67].

By applying several theoretical and empirical strategies, this study tried to reduce method bias. In theory, this study made sure that there were clear distinctions between the constructs of the model since this study carefully defined each variable based on the established literature, and this helped in reducing the potential overlap in the perception of the respondent [68,69]. Empirically, a three-wave data collection method was used, which entailed different variables being assessed at different times. This strategy makes the measurement of independent, mediating, and dependent variables at different points in time possible, therefore decreasing the probability of common method bias. The paper-pencil survey method, instead of an online format, also enables participants to focus on the responses and not quickly click through the options; hence, the data collected were valid and reliable. Such steps are very important for the building of a strong methodological base that allows us to be sure of the accuracy of the study’s results. Table 1 includes the demographic profile of the respondents.
Table 1. Demographic details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–40</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41–50</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–10 years</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Level</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
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<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
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<td>46.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>PhD or Doctorate</td>
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<td>27.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of Institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public sector</td>
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<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 2. The psychometric properties of the measurement model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Item Loading Range</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>rho_A</th>
<th>Composite Reliability</th>
<th>AVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>0.920–0.955</td>
<td>0.966</td>
<td>0.966</td>
<td>0.973</td>
<td>0.879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>0.788–0.940</td>
<td>0.983</td>
<td>0.983</td>
<td>0.984</td>
<td>0.830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIC</td>
<td>0.823–0.879</td>
<td>0.947</td>
<td>0.948</td>
<td>0.956</td>
<td>0.730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>0.937–0.953</td>
<td>0.970</td>
<td>0.970</td>
<td>0.976</td>
<td>0.893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TW</td>
<td>0.762–0.821</td>
<td>0.957</td>
<td>0.959</td>
<td>0.961</td>
<td>0.622</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The R squared values for the EIC, TA, and TW models provided us with evidence that 46.3%, 49.4%, and 26.4% of the variance in each construct were explained by the predictor variables. The adjusted R-squared values were nearly the same as the original, which is evidence of good modeling and robustness against overfitting. The f-squared values, which stand for the effect sizes of individual independent variables on dependent variables, were found to be substantial. AC had a significant impact on both EIC and TA.
with $f$-squared values of 0.654 and 0.634, respectively, demonstrating a strong predicting power. CSR had a moderate effect on TA ($f$ squared = 0.310), while CSR had a smaller, yet significant, impact on TW ($f$ squared = 0.048). The VIF values for all variables (AC, CSR, EIC, TA) were below 5, indicating a very low likelihood of multicollinearity. Hence, the predictors were not highly correlated, and they could explain the model more distinctively. For more detail, the readers are referred to Table 3.

Table 3. R-square, effect sizes, and multicollinearity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>$f$ Squared</th>
<th>$f$ Squared</th>
<th>$f$ Squared</th>
<th>$f$ Squared</th>
<th>TA</th>
<th>VIF</th>
</tr>
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<td>EIC</td>
<td>0.463</td>
<td>0.460</td>
<td>0.654</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>0.494</td>
<td>0.491</td>
<td>0.634</td>
<td>0.310</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TW</td>
<td>0.264</td>
<td>0.258</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.076</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The correlation matrix and Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio analysis offer insights into the hypothesized relationships and discriminant validity. The diagonal elements of the correlation matrix, representing the square root of AVE, demonstrate that each construct shares more variance with its indicators than with any other construct, confirming good discriminant validity [71]. Specifically, AC (0.938), CSR (0.911), EIC (0.855), TA (0.945), and TW (0.789) exhibit high correlations with their respective indicators. The HTMT ratios further validate discriminant validity, with all values being significantly below the threshold of 0.85, suggesting clear distinctions between constructs. Table 4 includes these results in detail.

Table 4. Discriminant validity and correlations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>CSR</th>
<th>EIC</th>
<th>TA</th>
<th>TW</th>
<th>HTMT AC</th>
<th>HTMT CSR</th>
<th>HTMT EIC</th>
<th>HTMT TA</th>
<th>HTMT TW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>0.938</td>
<td>0.355</td>
<td>0.673</td>
<td>0.677</td>
<td>0.455</td>
<td>0.365</td>
<td>0.703</td>
<td>0.699</td>
<td>0.468</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>0.911</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>0.244</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.345</td>
<td>0.426</td>
<td>0.460</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIC</td>
<td>0.855</td>
<td>0.617</td>
<td>0.444</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.644</td>
<td>0.460</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>0.945</td>
<td>0.475</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.485</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TW</td>
<td>0.789</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (SMART-PLS version 3.2) software, recognized for its robustness in PLS-SEM analysis [72–75], this study analyzed the data to test the hypotheses. The software’s importance lies in its ability to handle complex models, including mediation and moderation, which is essential for this study. The path coefficients indicate significant positive effects of CSR on EIC (0.139, $p < 0.001$), TA (0.288, $p < 0.001$), and TW (0.321, $p < 0.001$). These results lead to the acceptance of the hypotheses positing the direct effects of CSR on EIC (H2), TA (H5), and TW (H1). The indirect effects of CSR on TW through EIC (0.033, $p = 0.006$) and TA (0.090, $p < 0.001$) are significant, supporting the hypotheses that EIC (H4) and TA (H7) mediate the relationship between CSR and TW. The moderated mediation analysis shows the effect of AC on the strength of the indirect relationships between CSR and TW via EIC and TA. While the interaction term CSRxAC for the mediated path through EIC to TW (0.011, $p = 0.135$) is not significant, leading to the rejection of H8a, the term for the path through TA to TW (0.041, $p = 0.002$) is significant, leading to the acceptance of H8b. Figure 2 includes the structural model of this study. The simple slope analysis (Figures 3 and 4) illustrates these interactions, where the effect of CSR on EIC and TA is stronger when AC is high (+1 standard deviation above the mean level) compared to when AC is low (−1 standard deviation below the mean level). Table 5 provides a brief summary of hypotheses testing while Figure 2 represents the structural equation model.
Table 5. Hypotheses analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>T-Stats</th>
<th>p-Value</th>
<th>95% CI Lower</th>
<th>95% CI Upper</th>
<th>Accepted/Rejected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>CSR → TW</td>
<td>0.321</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>4.586</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.193</td>
<td>0.372</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>CSR → EIC</td>
<td>0.139</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>4.167</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>0.210</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4</td>
<td>CSR → EIC → TW</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>2.748</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5</td>
<td>CSR → TA</td>
<td>0.288</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>6.729</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.211</td>
<td>0.371</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7</td>
<td>CSR → TA → TW</td>
<td>0.090</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>4.150</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8a</td>
<td>CSRxAC → EIC → TW</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>1.496</td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td>−0.001</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8b</td>
<td>CSRxAC → TA → TW</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>3.046</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. The structural equation model of this study.

Figure 3. The moderation effect of AC between CSR and EIC at three different levels of means.
5. Discussion

This study’s exploration into the impacts of CSR within the educational sector reveals sophisticated dynamics between organizational efforts and teacher outcomes. Starting with the direct effects, this study found that CSR initiatives are indeed associated with increased teacher wellbeing, affirming the positive link established by prior studies in corporate settings [15,16] and extending it to the context of higher education. This provides empirical support to the notion that educational institutions’ social and environmental responsibilities are not just ethical imperatives but also contribute to the welfare of their staff. Examining the impact of CSR on educational institute culture, the results are aligned with the existing literature, which posits that CSR activities are key drivers in cultivating a supportive organizational culture [76,77]. The positive relationship found in this study confirms the transformative role CSR plays in the higher education sector, much as it does in the corporate world, by influencing the norms and values that underpin day-to-day operations and interactions within educational institutes.

The mediation hypotheses brought to light the complexity of how CSR initiatives translate into teacher wellbeing. Contrary to the expected, the mediating role of educational institute culture between CSR and teacher wellbeing, although supported, was less potent than anticipated. This finding suggests that while culture is an important conduit for CSR’s effects, other mediating mechanisms might be at play. In terms of the path from CSR to teacher admiration leading to teacher wellbeing, the results indicate the strong mediating role of teacher admiration. This adds a new dimension to the discussion around the psychological mechanisms underpinning CSR’s benefits, highlighting that teachers’ respect and high regard for their institution play a crucial role in how CSR efforts translate into personal wellbeing as acknowledged by Cegarra-Navarro and Martínez-Martínez [46].

The moderated mediation analysis added an intriguing layer of complexity. The expected moderated mediation effect of affective commitment on the relationship between CSR and teacher wellbeing via educational institute culture was not supported. This suggests that regardless of the level of emotional attachment teachers have to their institution, the culture created by CSR efforts alone does not significantly alter their wellbeing. Contrastingly, affective commitment was found to strengthen the effect of CSR on teacher wellbeing via teacher admiration, highlighting that the more emotionally invested teachers are in their institution, the more they stand to benefit from their institution’s CSR activities in terms of personal wellbeing. This finding is in line with Sweetman, et al. [66]. Collectively, the findings contribute a distinctive perspective to the
existing dialogue on the role of CSR in education. They illuminate the pathways through which CSR efforts impact teacher outcomes in the Chinese higher education context and underline the sophisticated role of emotional factors in optimizing these effects. This emphasizes the need for educational leaders to consider both the cultural and emotional dimensions of CSR in their strategic planning.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

This research contributes significantly to the body of knowledge on CSR in higher education, bridging several gaps in the existing literature. Firstly, it expands the understanding of CSR beyond the corporate sector to include educational institutions, offering insights into how CSR activities can enhance teacher wellbeing. This extends the domain of CSR studies into a new arena, emphasizing the potential of CSR in sectors traditionally viewed as primarily service-oriented and not-for-profit. Secondly, by establishing the mediating roles of educational institute culture and teacher admiration, this research elucidates the mechanisms through which CSR impacts teacher wellbeing. This not only responds to calls for a deeper understanding of the pathways connecting CSR to employee outcomes but also adds complexity to the theoretical models by incorporating both organizational and psychological mediators.

Moreover, the moderated mediation analysis incorporating affective commitment reveals how the impact of CSR on wellbeing can vary with the level of teachers’ emotional attachment to their institutions. This finding enriches the discussion on the contingency factors that influence the CSR–outcome relationship, providing a more sophisticated understanding of when and how CSR initiatives can be most effective. This study also contributes to the broader discourse on SET by exemplifying the exchange between teachers and their institutions beyond economic transactions. By showing how CSR initiatives can foster a culture of support and respect, leading to enhanced wellbeing, the findings offer new empirical evidence supporting the principles of SET in the educational context. In the context of the UN-SDGs, our study offers theoretical implications by demonstrating how the higher education sector can contribute to achieving these goals through CSR initiatives. By aligning CSR efforts with goals like quality education (Goal 4) and good health and wellbeing (Goal 3), our research highlights how educational institutions can serve as models of sustainable practice. This adds a new dimension to the understanding of CSR in the context of SDGs, emphasizing the role of educational institutions in promoting wellbeing and sustainability, not only among their staff and students but also in society at large. This research thus provides a theoretically grounded example of how the application of CSR in the education sector can support the broader agenda of sustainable development globally.

5.2. Practical Implications

This research provides critical insights into the practical application of CSR initiatives within the higher education sector, emphasizing their significant impact on enhancing teacher wellbeing. It is recommended that educational institutions embed CSR into their core values and operational strategies. By doing so, they can cultivate a supportive educational institute culture and elevate teacher admiration, which this study’s findings suggest are critical for improving teacher wellbeing. In practice, institutions should focus on developing transparent CSR policies that align with their educators’ values, actively involving teachers in CSR activities and decisions. Such engagement not only enriches the educational community but also strengthens the institution’s commitment to social and environmental responsibilities. Moreover, recognizing the importance of affective commitment, institutions are advised to foster deep, affective ties with their staff by aligning CSR efforts with the intrinsic values and goals of their educators.

From the perspective of the UN-SDGs, this study underlines the role educational institutions can play in advancing these goals through targeted CSR strategies. Institutions should align their CSR activities with SDGs, particularly those related to quality
education and wellbeing, creating ripple effects that extend beyond the classroom and into the broader community. By doing so, they reinforce the message that educational institutions are not only centers of learning but also stewards of societal and environmental wellbeing, thus contributing to the broader sustainable development agenda. This research suggests that when educational institutions take the lead in adopting and modeling sustainable practices, they not only enhance the wellbeing of their immediate stakeholders but also set the stage for a more sustainable future.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This research has limitations that future studies could address. The focus on specific Chinese cities limits the generalizability of the findings; therefore, further research could examine diverse international contexts. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of bias, suggesting the need for objective measures in future work. This study’s design precludes the observation of long-term effects, presenting an opportunity for longitudinal research to track the sustainability of CSR impacts over time. Finally, exploring the broader implications of educational CSR on societal outcomes, particularly in relation to the UN-SDGs, remains an area ripe for investigation.

6. Conclusions

Thus, our study contributes to the literature regarding CSR in the higher education sector in China by showing that CSR has a positive impact on teacher wellbeing. This study identified educational institution culture and teacher admiration as mediator variables and affective commitment as the moderator, which implies that the relationship between an institution’s CSR activities and individual teacher outcomes is a multifaceted one. The findings of this study give significant information about the best possible ways of applying CSR projects in the advancement of educational environment and the wellbeing of teachers. Thus, our findings suggest that educational institutions that participate in CSR activities that are consistent with teachers’ beliefs and that promote a healthy organizational climate and environmental responsibility not only enhance staff satisfaction but also provide examples of sustainable behaviors consistent with the UN-SDGs. This places educational institutions in a vanguard position to serve as models in the attainment of societal welfare and the preservation of the environment.

The results of our research can be applied directly to the Chinese educational policy and standard. In particular, the Chinese Ministry of Education can refer to our study to supplement the existing documents like “Guidelines for the Implementation of CSR in Higher Education” and the “National Teacher Development Plan”. This current study highlights that CSR positively affects teacher’s wellbeing and indicates that educational organizations must integrate CSR strategies that cover environmental protection, community involvement, and ethical leadership into the guidelines. These strategies should be made compulsory and should be included in the accreditation of the institutions. Moreover, it is also shown that educational institution culture and teacher admiration are also important for wellbeing. It is possible to establish policies that would facilitate the development of positive working conditions for the growth of the professionals and the acknowledgement of teachers’ efforts. When the metrics for the assessment of the institutional culture and teacher satisfaction are incorporated into the plan, this can help to make teacher wellbeing an important component of the educational improvement plan.

Furthermore, the incorporation of the teacher wellbeing metrics suggested in this study can be useful to design a specific policy for tracking and increasing teacher wellbeing in schools. This policy should cover the evaluation of the level of satisfaction of teachers, provisions of mental healthcare, and professional development programs associated with CSR endeavors. By incorporating these research findings into the system of educational policy in China, educational institutions can be in a position to support their staff, in addition to being in a position to address the global sustainability goals, hence creating a sustainable future.
Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Considering the observational nature of this study and with no medical conditions to the respondents, a formal ethical approval was not required.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from each respondent.

Data Availability Statement: The data will be made available on reasonable request by contacting the author.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Table A1. The list of statements used in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Item Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSR1</td>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>Environmental issues are an integral part of my educational institute’s strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR2</td>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>My educational institute participates in activities that aim to protect and improve the quality of the natural environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR3</td>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>My educational institute implements special programs to minimize its negative impact on the natural environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR4</td>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>My educational institute takes great care so that our work does not harm the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR5</td>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>My educational institute develops activities to reduce the consumption of energy and other resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR6</td>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>My educational institute targets sustainable growth that considers future generations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR7</td>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>My educational institute makes investments to create a better life for future generations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR8</td>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>My educational institute supports non-governmental organizations working in problematic areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR9</td>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>My educational institute contributes to campaigns and projects that promote the well-being of society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR10</td>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>My educational institute contributes to cultural and charitable projects aimed at promoting the well-being of society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR11</td>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>My educational institute encourages employees to participate in voluntary activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR12</td>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>My educational institute policies encourage employees to develop their skills and careers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR13</td>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>The management of my educational institute primarily concerns with employees’ needs and wants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR14</td>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>My educational institute implements flexible policies to provide a good work-life balance for its employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR15</td>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>The managerial decisions related to employees in my educational institute are usually fair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIC1</td>
<td>EIC</td>
<td>My educational institute provides various formal training programs to improve the skills of employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIC2</td>
<td>EIC</td>
<td>My educational institute provides various informal training programs to improve the skills of employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIC3</td>
<td>EIC</td>
<td>My educational institute encourages employees to continue their education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIC4</td>
<td>EIC</td>
<td>My educational institute supports employees who seek to acquire job-related skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIC5</td>
<td>EIC</td>
<td>My educational institute supports employees who want to get a work-related education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIC6</td>
<td>EIC</td>
<td>Employees in my educational institute cooperate with each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIC7</td>
<td>EIC</td>
<td>Employees in my educational institute respect each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIC8</td>
<td>EIC</td>
<td>Employees in my educational institute trust each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AC1</td>
<td>AC</td>
<td>I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this educational institute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AC2</td>
<td>AC</td>
<td>I enjoy discussing my educational institute with people outside it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AC3</td>
<td>AC</td>
<td>I really feel as if this educational institute’s problems are my own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AC4</td>
<td>AC</td>
<td>I feel emotionally attached to this educational institute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AC5</td>
<td>AC</td>
<td>This educational institute has a great deal of personal meaning for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TW1</td>
<td>TW</td>
<td>I feel satisfied with my life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TW2</td>
<td>TW</td>
<td>I am close to my dream in most aspects of my life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TW3 TW Most of the time, I do feel real happiness.
TW4 TW I am in a good life situation.
TW5 TW My life is very fun.
TW6 TW I would hardly change my current way of life in the afterlife.
TW7 TW I am satisfied with my work responsibilities.
TW8 TW In general, I feel fairly satisfied with my present job.
TW9 TW I find real enjoyment in my work.
TW10 TW I can always find ways to enrich my work.
TW11 TW Work is a meaningful experience for me.
TW12 TW I feel basically satisfied with my work achievements in my current job.
TW13 TW I feel I have grown as a person.
TW14 TW I handle daily affairs well.
TW15 TW I generally feel good about myself, and I'm confident.
TW16 TW People think I am willing to give and to share my time with others.
TW17 TW I am good at making flexible timetables for my work.
TW18 TW I love having deep conversations with family and friends so that we can better understand each other.

TA1 TA I admire my educational institute.
TA2 TA I respect my educational institute.
TA3 TA I feel reverence towards my educational institute.
TA4 TA I feel awe towards my educational institute.
TA5 TA I feel inspired by my educational institute.

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