

Influencing Factors and Preventive Strategies of Job Burnout in Preschool Teachers

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Abstract: Early childhood education is the starting point of a person's socialization process. The rudiments of some thinking and habits formed in early childhood will affect the thinking mode and behavior choice in the process of personal growth. The professional enthusiasm of preschool teachers will affect the formation of children's emotional stability, personality and behavior. The study of preschool teachers' Job Burnout and its influencing factors has strong theoretical and practical significance. The results show that job intensity, career development opportunities and parents' support attitude are the three key factors affecting preschool teachers' job burnout. The prevention strategies of preschool teachers' job burnout are put forward from three aspects: Lifelong learning, platform construction and home school interaction.

Keywords: preschool teachers; Job burnout; Influencing factors; Preventive strategy

1. Introduction

Young children are the hope of a family and the future of society. Early childhood education plays a very important role in leading the development of children's intelligence, abilities and awareness, as well as in improving social civilization and harmony, reducing social class differences and spreading healthy values. In the process of leapfrogging preschool education^[1], preschool teachers' burnout is a barrier to the sustainable development of preschool teachers. Job burnout of preschool teachers, in short, is the phenomenon that preschool teachers experience low professional emotions and deteriorating professional attitudes as work pressure increases, leading to a serious lack of professional fulfillment^[2], which has a very negative impact on both teachers and students. For teachers, burnout is detrimental to their own physical and psychological health and can cause a series of problems such as a lack of interest in their profession, a lack of enthusiasm for teaching, a rejection of teaching reforms, and a loss of the vitality and creativity that preschool teachers are supposed to have, which can further lead to emotional disorders and nasty accidents in kindergartens. Burnout is also a major cause of high turnover among preschool teachers, with 83.75% of parents in this study expressing concern about "changing teachers in kindergarten". For students, and for young children in their infancy, preschool teachers' burnout affects the formation of emotional stability, personality and mental images, and is not beneficial to the healthy growth and character building of young children. The proportion of female preschool teachers is as high as 97.79% in China. Most female preschool teachers are in the transition period from immaturity to maturity, which is a critical period for physical and mental development, emotional and intellectual refinement and personality orientation. They are prone to burnout if they lack effective guidance. As society in general gradually awakens to the importance of early childhood education and pays attention to the mental health of preschool teachers, the issue of preschool teachers' burnout should become a key topic in the professional development of preschool teachers, which has strong practical significance. What is job burnout? What factors influence burnout in preschool teachers? How can it be avoided and prevented? It needs further analysis.

2. Overview of Research on Preschool Teachers' Burnout

Freudenberger first proposed the concept of burnout in the 1970s and introduced it into psychology. It refers to a series of psychological and physiological syndromes manifested as a stress response to chronic sources of emotional and interpersonal tension in an occupational environment, which are extreme manifestations of an individual's inability to deal successfully with work stress^[3]. In the 1970s, Maslach identified burnout as a psychological state consisting of three core components: emotional

exhaustion, deindividuation and reduced personal fulfillment. As individuals' emotional attitudes were in a state of extreme fatigue for a long time, they would be prone to negative emotions and slow down work, resulting in a reduced personal sense of achievement^[4]. Teacher burnout: an extreme reaction when teachers are unable to cope successfully with the stress of their work, a state of emotional, attitudinal and behavioral exhaustion resulting from the experience of prolonged stress^[5]. Not to be underestimated, teacher burnout can start with physical and mental exhaustion, reduced interest in the profession, a gradual loss of responsibility, reduced enthusiasm and motivation for the job, settling for the status quo, a lack of motivation, and even tension, anxiety, irritability, and depression. Schwabertal (1996) Burnout is more likely to occur early in a teacher's career: younger teachers are more likely to experience burnout than older teachers^[6]. Despite the different entry points of previous research, most studies have shown that burnout is strongly associated with individual factors. Foreign studies have shown that there is also much less mutual support and cooperative teaching behaviour among teachers than among those in other professions. In a good organization, the chance of job burnout will be reduced.

With the increasing demand for quantity and quality of preschool education from young children and parents in China, the country has shown a high level of enthusiasm for research on preschool teachers' burnout. Based on the bibliometric analysis of the WOS database, Guo Rong (2021) reviewed international research on teacher burnout and concluded that the frontiers of research were the interrelationships between the three major elements of self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and job engagement and teacher burnout^[7]. Shi Zhongying (2020)^[8] argues that the root cause of teacher burnout lies in the fact that some teachers are engaged in a kind of alienated labour, which means that it is contrary to the free and autonomous nature of teachers themselves, and that the problem of burnout should be completely addressed from the source of recruitment, enhancing teachers' autonomy and participation in teaching reform. Xie Jianluo (2020) argues that preschool teachers' burnout goes through six stages: busy and confused→achievement depression→career frustration→equity conflict→physical and mental exhaustion→regretful rejection. Xia Fei (2020)^[9] argues that work stress and expression inhibition are strongly related to preschool teachers' burnout, and that attention should be paid to the regulation of preschool teachers' emotions and stress balance to alleviate burnout. Looking at the research on the factors influencing burnout, the formation of burnout among preschool teachers can be broadly discussed in terms of personal factors, work stress and work environment.

3. Analysis of The Factors Influencing Preschool Teachers' Burnout

3.1 Questionnaire

Burnout inhibits the activities and creativity of early childhood teachers and acts as a roadblock to the development of creativity and imagination. In order to explore the influencing factors of preschool teachers' job burnout, this paper conducted a survey on 285 preschool teachers in Fujian Province of China by means of online survey, on-site interview, telephone interview, questionnaire star online surveys, and so on. The survey period was mainly from June 2021 to December 2021. Firstly, the data obtained from the interview was sorted into an interview outline. In combination with the interview data and on the basis of referring to the Maslach burnout scale and relevant theoretical research, this paper designs a questionnaire for job burnout of preschool teachers, including two aspects: the first part is the basic situation investigation (8 questions), the second part is the impact of burnout factors investigation (13 questions). A total of 285 questionnaires were designed and distributed, and 267 questionnaires were returned, of which 245 were valid (effective rate was about 91.6%). Among the valid questionnaires, 99.2% of them were from female preschool teachers, 67.1% were aged 18-25 (including 25 years old) and 32.9% were aged 26 or above.

3.2 Exploring the Factors Affecting Burnout in Preschool Teachers

According to research by scholars at home and abroad, there are many factors that influence burnout in preschool teachers, and in summary, there are three main aspects: personal, professional and social factors. (1) Personal factors: Also known as individual factors, they generally include age, marital status, education, personality, income status, age of education, and so forth. Regardless of whether the population of burnout is consistent in domestic and international studies, there is a commonality: it is closely related to personal factors. Currently, most preschool teachers are women under the age of 40, with a younger physiological age, a lack of composure and anxiety, a less comprehensive knowledge of the profession and their position, and burnout that varies according to their teaching experience and the

system of the unit they work in. (2) Professional factors: These include teachers' autonomy and voice in teaching, the specificity of the educational target, workload, and opportunities and treatment for professional development. According to Marx's theory of alienated labour there should be assimilation rather than alienation between teachers and teaching activities, and teachers' autonomy and voice are conducive to protecting teachers' initial, heartfelt love of teaching early childhood and preventing utilitarian aims. The work of preschool teachers has certain particularity because they are faced with a group of children with weak self-care ability, poor safety awareness and self-protection ability, lack of knowledge and experience, but full of curiosity about the world, in the rapid growth of body and mind, strong plasticity, strong imitation ability, who also rely on and trust their teachers. Higher workloads without matching pay and status should be a significant trigger for burnout in preschool teachers. The effective personal motivation that comes with career development opportunities and remuneration should go a long way to alleviating frustration and lack of confidence in the career process.(3) Social factors: It refers to whether there is discrimination or prejudice in a certain profession, especially the attitude of parents of young children. Parents' awareness of the importance of early childhood education has increased, and their expectations of the environment in which their children will grow up have been transferred to the kindergarten and the preschool teachers, which in turn has led to pressure on the preschool teachers. The trust, effective intervention and positive involvement of the family can go a long way to alleviating the tension of the work of the preschool teachers. When preschool teachers themselves start a family, the level of family support and the balance between work and family can have a greater impact on how they perceive and give to their profession. The extent to which society perceives the status of preschool teachers also influences their self-efficacy to some extent.

3.3 Regression Analysis

The data recovered on the factors influencing burnout in preschool teachers were studied by regression analysis using SPSS 22.0 software, and the variability of the factors influencing burnout was derived in terms of individual, occupational characteristics and social factors, and the results of the regression analysis are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Factors influencing preschool teachers' burnout

Variable	Regression coefficient(β)
Age	-0.143
Marital status	0.128
Income	-0.176
The particularity of educational objects	0.097
Teaching discourse power	0.296**
Career development opportunity	-0.232*
Attitudes of parents of young children	-0.285**

Note: * significance level < 0.05 , ** significance level < 0.01 , *** significance level < 0.001 .

The study showed that among the individual variables for preschool teachers, age and burnout were negatively related ($\beta = -0.143$), but the effect was not significant. In the early stages of their careers, younger teachers, when they first enter society as well as their jobs, are full of ambitions and aspirations for their long-planned careers. When reality clashes with ideals, this can easily lead to emotional instability, further inducing lower emotional engagement and a slacker teaching attitude. The older the teacher, the more their career has plateaued, and older teachers are able to adjust more quickly and better than younger teachers, reducing the likelihood of burnout. In the variable 'marital status' (characterized by '1' for married and '0' for unmarried), $\beta=0.128$ indicates that burnout is higher among married preschool teachers, with 99.2% of the survey respondents being female. For married female preschool teachers, the time and emotional commitment to work usually gives way to family, especially in private kindergartens, and commitment to the profession is lower. A general consensus can be reached on the indicator of income, where higher income leads to lower burnout. The special characteristics of the target group are positively correlated with burnout (correlation coefficient $\beta=0.097$), but the difference is not very significant. There is no great difference in the children taught by preschool teachers. Most of them are innocent and lively children aged 3-6 years old, with a strong desire for knowledge, but poor self-care ability, safety awareness and self-protection ability. Most of them love to play and be active, and have strong commonalities in intelligence, traits, emotions and other aspects. The difference of education object will not have much influence on the job burnout of preschool teachers. Teaching discourse power is significantly and positively correlated with burnout (correlation coefficient $\beta=0.296^{**}$), and the results indicate that the power of teaching discourse is a direct motivation for burnout among preschool teachers. How to make teachers love teaching young

children from the heart and make them feel autonomous and discursive is an important safeguard against preschool teachers' burnout. To do the work of teaching young children is not contrary to the free and autonomous nature of human beings, and to engage in teaching not just as a means of survival, but with an intrinsic love of children and of education. Experiencing a sense of intrinsic meaning and value in teaching and learning autonomy is key to sustaining the long-term sustainability of preschool teachers. In addition, there was a negative correlation between career development opportunities and burnout (correlation coefficient $\beta = -0.232^*$), with good career development opportunities creating job expectations and a natural decrease in negative feelings among preschool teachers. There was a significant negative relationship between the attitude of parents and burnout (correlation coefficient $\beta = -0.285^{***}$). 155 of the preschool teachers surveyed felt that the attitude of parents was positive and good, while 48 felt that the attitude of parents was average and a few felt that the attitude of parents was bad. A good attitude from parents of young children often has a very positive effect on the kindergarten and can further help the kindergarten as well as the preschool teachers in their daily teaching. Positive communication and interaction between preschool teachers and parents is also key to maintaining the autonomy of preschool teachers.

4. Burnout Prevention Strategies for Preschool Teachers

The results of the study show that the teaching autonomy, voice of preschool teachers, career development opportunities, and parents' supportive attitudes are the key factors influencing preschool teachers' burnout. Strategies for preventing preschool teachers' burnout are proposed in the following three aspects.

4.1 Be A Lifelong Learner and Maintain Positive Teaching

The daily work of early childhood teachers is professional, technical, tedious and repetitive, and requires a high degree of adaptability, influence, co-ordination, verbal skills and hands-on skills. Without strong cultural and psychological adjustment skills, it is easy to become physically and mentally exhausted, leading to burnout. Therefore, early childhood teachers can continue to improve their cultural training through various professional studies, be lifelong learners, constantly adapt themselves to relieve psychological stress, practice the concept of "nurturing young children and raising them right", greet young children like the sunrise in a superior and full state, and complete their daily teaching work in a fulfilling and fulfilling way.

4.2 Encourage the Introduction of Male Preschool Teachers to Improve the Ecology of Preschool Education

Early childhood education has a long way to go, and compared with foreign countries, the proportion of male teachers in our country is seriously imbalanced. Too single female teachers will make preschool education ecology more feminine, less masculine, education atmosphere more serious, less lively. "Men and women match, work is not tired", everything pays attention to the way of balance, the gender ratio of preschool teachers also pays attention to the way of Yin and Yang, the excessive single gender of preschool teachers is not conducive to active teaching order, will also induce a series of problems such as job burnout, which is not an ideal education ecology, and is not conducive to optimizing the quality of preschool teachers' teaching. As male preschool teachers are unique and irreplaceable in early childhood education, a publicly funded male preschool teachers training programme can be restarted to establish a career advancement system for male preschool teachers that takes into account equity and differentiation, activating the atmosphere for preschool teachers and alleviating a range of psychological and emotional problems arising from the current overly homogeneous gender of teachers.

4.3 Home-School Interaction to Optimize the Quality of Preschool Education

Parents are the initiation teachers of their children. In addition to dealing with a group of children who have diverse personalities, habits and behaviors, who are curious about the world they know, and whose knowledge of rules and order is still in its infancy, preschool teachers also have to deal with the problem of communication at home. Kindergartens and families should respect the professional autonomy and voice of teachers. If this power is not protected, it will lead to a loss of teacher autonomy, further triggering professional burnout and resistance, and the teaching of preschool teachers will

become a form of alienated labour. Therefore, the negative consequences of this can be transferred to the children and their families.

5. Conclusion

A hundred years of life are founded on early learning. Early childhood education is an art that requires emotion, a discipline that needs to be infused with love, moistening things and turning love into spring rain. The strong plasticity of young children and the non-reversibility of early childhood education require versatile preschool teachers to further strengthen their educational philosophy, improve their moral training, enhance their educational skills, care for the free space for young children to grow, respect the objective learning rules of young children, adapt to the behavioral characteristics and thinking patterns of young children, and integrate the growth of young children with their own lifelong learning. Early childhood teacher burnout is an outward expression of preschool teachers' negative emotions and is characterized by concealment and heterogeneity. Society and educational institutions should respect the teaching subject status and voice of preschool teachers, give them more respect as well as more room for growth, and improve the proprietary title rating system for preschool education, the professional assessment mechanism and the professional development mechanism for preschool teachers. Encourage the introduction of male preschool teachers and establish a mechanism to channel the negative emotions of preschool teachers so as to enhance their sense of happiness and value at work, help them develop, as well as bring new well-being to the growth of young children.

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