

Research on Professional Life Quality of Preschool Teachers in Chinese Poverty Counties: Job Satisfaction' Perspective

He Kongchao¹, Li Min¹, Zhang Yongbo¹ & Yang Xiaoping¹

¹ Faculty of Education, Southwest University, Chongqing, P. R. China

Correspondence: He Kongchao, Faculty of Education, Southwest University, No. 2 Tiansheng Road, Beibei, Chongqing 400715, P. R. China. E-mail: hebert1996@126.com

Received: October 12, 2014 Accepted: December, 3, 2014 Online Published: April 2, 2015

doi:10.5539/ass.v11n9p176

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ass.v11n9p176>

Abstract

Preschool teachers' job satisfactions are the core representation of teachers' professional life quality. Through evaluating the preschool teachers' job satisfactions in Chinese poverty counties, we can predict the level of preschool teachers' professional living quality in poverty-stricken areas. Taken 110 teachers in Poverty County F as sample, using questionnaire and interview, it is concluded that: the overall situation of job satisfaction of preschool teachers in poverty-stricken areas is still insufficient ideal, the dissatisfaction of economic income and working conditions are still most prominent phenomenon. In order to improve preschool teachers' job satisfaction working in remote poverty counties, thus enhancing the preschool education quality in impoverished areas, it is urgent to promote the level of teachers' salaries and make kindergarten physical environment better. Meanwhile, improving leadership style, building good working atmosphere in preschools and then increasing teachers' in-service training opportunities are also important.

Keywords: preschool teacher, life quality, job satisfaction

1. Background

Teacher is the core factor to the development and reform of education. Teachers' attitudes, beliefs, capabilities and expectations are vital to realize educational fairness and efficiency. But teacher is not just important education resources. As human beings, teacher's professional life quality must be concerned. There are diverse assessment methods about the level of professional living quality, and the evaluation of job satisfaction is a important one of them. The internal factors such as teacher perceived organization support (Bogler et al., 2012), self-efficacy (Klassen et al., 2010), motivation (Nadim et al., 2012), vocational values (Xu & Zhang, 2012), emotion regulation mode (Zhang & Liu, 2008), professional commitment (Xu & Zhu, 2005), professional identity (Tang, 2009) and external factors such as leadership style (Bogler, 2001; Recepoglu, E. 2008; Shen et al., 2003; Zhang & Wu, 2001), school atmosphere (Collie et al., 2012; Lam & Yan, 2011) that affect teachers' job satisfaction, as well as the relationship between teachers' job satisfaction and students' academic achievements (Iwu et al., 2013) have been discussed, and the structure model of teacher' job satisfaction affecting factors (Jiang et al., 2006) has been preliminary confirmed. However, the studies of teachers' job satisfaction were not fully focused on preschool teachers; high-quality research results are limited. A series of central policies and *Action Plans* issued by Zhōngguó zhèngfǔ (源语言: 中文)

Chinese government push forward the leap-frog development of nationwide preschool education since 2010. During that period, once poor and weak areas' preschool education acquired a completely new outlook. Children' opportunities to attend preschool are promoting substantially and the scale of preschool teacher tool a quantum leap. But these preschool teachers' professional life quality hasn't got enough attention. By the evaluation of job satisfaction, we can get a reflection of judge preschool teachers' professional living quality in poverty-stricken areas and current preschool education' development situation. Besides, the future preschool education and teachers' policy arrangement may gain enlightenment from such research.

2. Method

2.1 Definition

Based on Rodgers-Jenkinson & Chapman (1990), Landy, F. J. (1989) and others' definition of teachers' job satisfaction, preschool teachers' job satisfaction in this study will be defined as preschool teachers' general and subjective attitudes and opinions towards their job as preschool teachers, working conditions, as well as status.

2.2 Sampling

In order to inspect pertinently the preschool teachers' professional living quality in Chinese poverty-stricken areas, the whole sampling process consists of two steps: firstly, by means of purposeful sampling, choose *Poverty County F* located in remote rural areas of *Chongqing City* as the sample, which is one of most poverty-stricken county according to *Chinese National Standard of Poverty County*. Secondly, by the method of stratified random sampling within County F, 110 preschool teachers in 7 preschools were invited to be participants.

Table1. Sample information

	Public (Independent)	Public (Affiliated)	Private
County town	1(42)		1(20)
Countryside		3(30)	2(18)

Note: The numbers outside the brackets represent preschools; the numbers inside represent teachers. There is no male teacher.

2.3 Tools

Anonymous questionnaire and individual interview were used as main methods to collect data. Referring to Chen & Sun (1994) and others' scale of teachers' job satisfaction, the researchers designed "preschool teachers' job satisfaction questionnaire". This questionnaire is composed of personal background information and job satisfaction. The former part includes gender, working years, professional titles, educational background, as well as the nature of organization; the later part includes satisfaction of economic income, labor intensity, physical conditions, relationship with colleagues, relationship with parents, relationship with children, leadership and management, work stress, social reputation, and in-service development, as well as the overall satisfaction. Questionnaire is designed as Likert's 5 point form (from "strong dissatisfied", "not satisfied", "general", "satisfied", to "very satisfied" were represented with numbers from 1 to 5). The internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) is 0.808. At the same time, in each sample preschool, some teachers were individually interviewed. The study ought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the most satisfied aspect about your current job?
2. What is the most dissatisfied one?
3. What is the most important reason for you to continually hold this job?

Quantitative data was processed and analyzed by SPSS 18.0.

3. Results

3.1 General Condition

3.1.1 Overall Satisfaction and Satisfaction of Ten Dimensions

Two ways are used to understand each teacher's overall job satisfaction: firstly, in the questionnaire, there is an "overall situation" asking for teacher's self-evaluation; secondly, average score of ten dimensions is used to represent the overall job satisfaction. The two ways has extremely significant correlation ($r = 0.624$, $P < 0.001$). In the case of teachers' self-evaluation, the minimum is 2, the maximum is 5, the average is 3.77, the standard deviation is 0.659, with 4.5% chose "not satisfied", 21.8% chose "general", 65.5% chose "satisfied", and 8.2% chose "very satisfied". In terms of average score, the minimum is 2.6, the maximum is 4.9, the average is 3.6827, and the standard deviation is 0.44327.

Table 2. Satisfaction of each dimension

	Strongly dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	General	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Relationship with colleagues	0	0	6.4%	58.2%	35.5%	3	5	4.29	.580
Relationship with children	0	0	8.2%	64.5%	27.3%	3	5	4.19	.567
Leadership and management	0.9%	0	10.9%	63.6%	24.5%	1	5	4.11	.654
Relationship with Parent	0	0	18.2%	67.3%	14.5%	3	5	3.96	.574
Social reputation	0.9%	6.4%	20.0%	64.5%	8.2%	1	5	3.73	.741
Work stress	1.8%	6.4%	37.3%	48.2%	6.4%	1	5	3.51	.787
In-service development	0.9%	10.0%	33.6%	49.1%	6.4%	1	5	3.50	.799
Labor intensity	2.7%	8.2%	30.9%	54.5%	3.6%	1	5	3.48	.810
Physical conditions	0	10.0%	40.9%	44.5%	4.5%	2	5	3.44	.736
Economic income	14.5%	30.9%	33.6%	20.0%	0.9%	1	5	2.62	.995

After further analyzing the situation of each dimension, it is suggested that: dimensions with higher satisfaction is around relationships, especially relationship with colleagues (the average is 4.29, the minimum is 3, satisfied percentage is 93.7%) and with children (the average is 4.19, the minimum is 3, satisfied percentage is 91.8%); the lowest satisfied dimension is economic income (the average is 2.62, the minimum is 1, satisfied percentage is just 20.9%).

3.1.2 Correlation between Each Dimension

After the mutual correlation analysis between ten dimensions and overall satisfaction, it can be found that: firstly, whether self-evaluated or calculated, there are significant positive correlations between overall satisfaction and the ten dimensions, and in-service development, leadership and management, as well as social reputation have the most strong correlations; secondly, there are significant positive correlation between in-service development and all other dimensions; thirdly, social reputation has significant positive correlation with all other dimensions except relationship with colleagues; fourthly, the correlation between income and all interpersonal dimensions is not significant, but satisfaction of income has significant positive correlation with labor intensity, physical conditions, work stress, social reputation, and in-service development.

Table 3. Correlation between dimensions

	Economic income	Labor intensity	Physical conditions	Relationship with colleagues	Relationship with Parents	Relationship with children	Leadership and management	Work stress	Social reputation	In-service development
Economic income	1.000	.428**	.386**	-.013	.115	.028	.050	.311**	.204*	.254**
Labor intensity	.428**	1.000	.510**	.185	.258**	.146	.018	.724**	.352**	.236*
Physical conditions	.386**	.510**	1.000	.120	.191*	.109	.188*	.426**	.322**	.393**
Relationship with colleagues	-.013	.185	.120	1.000	.542**	.588**	.469**	.284**	.148	.307**
Relationship with Parents	.115	.258**	.191*	.542**	1.000	.517**	.440**	.309**	.472**	.298**
Relationship with children	.028	.146	.109	.588**	.517**	1.000	.420**	.200*	.228*	.244*
Leadership and management	.050	.018	.188*	.469**	.440**	.420**	1.000	.103	.343**	.434**
Work stress	.311**	.724**	.426**	.284**	.309**	.200*	.103	1.000	.262**	.381**
Social reputation	.204*	.352**	.322**	.148	.472**	.228*	.343**	.262**	1.000	.344**
In-service development	.254**	.236*	.393**	.307**	.298**	.244*	.434**	.381**	.344**	1.000
Overall satisfaction(self-evaluated)	.215*	.332**	.415**	.189*	.414**	.252**	.540**	.330**	.531**	.585**
Overall satisfaction(calculated)	.582**	.652**	.603**	.549**	.591**	.496**	.469**	.681**	.512**	.653**

** P<0.01; * P< 0.05

3.2 Comparative Analysis

3.2.1 Satisfaction of Teachers with Different Years of Working

By analyzing the correlation between teachers' working experience and their satisfaction, it is suggested that there is a significant negative correlation between years of working and overall satisfaction, labor intensity, work stress and in-service development. The longer they work, the lower the satisfaction level is.

Table 4. The correlation between work experience and satisfaction levels

		Economic income	Labor intensity	Physical conditions	Relationship with colleagues	Relationship with Parents	Relationship with children	Leadership and management	Work stress	Social reputation	In-service development	Overall satisfaction (self-evaluated)	Overall satisfaction (calculated)
Years of working	Pearson	-.169	-.333**	-.163	-.058	-.054	-.061	-.059	-.247**	-.244*	-.276**	-.302**	-.291**
	Spearman	-.212*	-.295**	-.209*	-.177	-.117	-.110	-.179	-.317**	-.131	-.311**	-.312**	-.391**

** P<0.01; * P< 0.05

3.2.2 Satisfaction of Teachers with Different Professional Titles

By analyzing the correlation between teachers' professional titles and their satisfaction, it is suggested that titles and working stress is significantly negatively correlated. That is to say, teachers with higher titles have stronger working stress while have lower satisfaction. Chi-square test confirms this conclusion (P <0.05). However, the

results of variance analysis suggest that, whether overall satisfaction or satisfactions of 10 dimensions, the differences between different titles are not significant.

Table 5. The correlation between professional titles and work satisfaction

professional titles (Spearman)	Economic income	Labor intensity	Physical conditions	Relationship with colleagues	Relationship with Parents	Relationship with children	Leadership and management	Work stress	Social reputation	In-service development	Overall satisfaction (self-evaluated)	Overall satisfaction (calculated)
	-.152	-.173	-.042	-.096	-.034	.038	.087	-.261**	.034	-.169	-.117	-.200*

** P<0.01; * P< 0.05

3.2.3 Satisfaction of Teachers with Different Educational Backgrounds

By analyzing the correlation between education background and satisfaction, it is suggested that there is a significant negative correlation between education background and satisfaction in relationships with colleagues, teachers and children. This conclusion (P <0.05) is confirmed by Chi-square test. The results of variance analysis show that the difference between satisfied degree in relationship with children (F = 3.546, P = 0.009) and in-service development (F = 6.180, P = 0.000) are significant. By comparing the mean, it is found that, teachers with normal school certificate have the highest satisfaction in relationship with children (mean 4.47) while teachers graduated from secondary schools has the lowest satisfaction(mean 3.80); teachers with college background have the highest satisfaction of in-service development (mean 4.0) while teachers just graduated from secondary schools have the lowest satisfaction (mean 2.40). The differences of in-service development are confirmed by Chi-square test (P <0.01).

Table 6. The correlation between educational background and satisfaction

Educational background (Spearman)	Economic income	Labor intensity	Physical conditions	Relationship with colleagues	Relationship with Parents	Relationship with children	Leadership and management	Work stress	Social reputation	In-service development	Overall satisfaction (self-evaluated)	Overall satisfaction (calculated)
	.056	.103	.158	-.266**	-.169	-.220*	-.100	.063	.010	-.026	-.131	-.088

** P<0.01; * P< 0.05

3.2.4 Satisfaction of Teachers in Different Preschools

Variance analysis suggests that teachers in different preschools have significantly different satisfaction in dimension of economic income (F = 7.267, P = 0.001), labor intensity (F = 16.848, P = 0.000), relationship with colleagues (F = 11.217, P = 0.000), relationship with parents (F = 4.451, P = 0.014), relationship with children (F = 3.533, P = 0.033), working stress (F = 15.750, P = 0.000), social reputation (F = 3.869, P = 0.024), in-service development (F = 8.576, P = 0.000) and overall satisfaction (F = 3.327, P = 0.040). Chi-square test also showed that there is a very significant difference (P <0.01) in satisfaction of income, labor intensity, relationships with colleagues, work stress, in-service development. Satisfaction of relationship with children is also significantly different (P <0.05).

Table 7. Satisfaction of teachers in different preschools

	Economic income	Labor intensity	Relationship with colleagues	Relationship with parents	Relationship with children	Work stress	Social reputation	In-service development	Overall satisfaction
private preschools	3.00	3.69	3.61	4.11	4.25	3.75	3.89	3.81	3.94
public affiliated preschools	2.74	3.90	4.61	4.06	4.35	3.87	3.87	3.65	3.84
public independent preschools	2.21	3.00	3.23	3.77	4.02	3.05	3.49	3.14	3.58

4. Discussion

4.1 Preschool Teachers' Satisfaction of Economic Income in Impoverished County Is the Lowest but not the Determinant of Overall Job Satisfaction

Data in this study suggests that preschool teacher's job satisfaction in impoverished county is above "general" and close to "satisfied". This situation can be mainly explained by Chinese national government's policies aiming at promoting preschool education's development in recent years. Meanwhile, local county governments carry out a series of reform measures. To some extent, those policies and measures have improved preschool teachers' working and living conditions in impoverished county. But preschool teachers' economic income problem is still severe, its satisfaction dimension is the only one below 3 (i.e., tend to be not satisfied). During the interview, many teachers said that, "if there is any unsatisfactory aspect about my job, income is the most unsatisfactory one. It is too low to be proportional to our contribution." This conclusion is consistent with a number of other studies (Jiang, 2009; Yu et al., 2013).

However, it is important to note that although the satisfaction degree of economic income is very low, but it is not the determinant. Correlation analysis of dimensions showed that the main factors which are closely related to economic income satisfaction are labor intensity, physical condition, working stress and in-service development, but their correlations with various interpersonal dimensions is not significant. So, it can be concluded that, the improvement of teachers' economic income can enhance their overall job satisfaction and satisfaction in dimensions talked above to a certain extent, but cannot directly improve satisfaction in interpersonal dimensions. Preschool teachers choose those jobs not just for the sake of economic interests, but as many teachers said during the interview, "Children is the reason that make me still stick to this job. I like children. I like their innocent and naive faces. It is very happy to stay with children." Therefore, to improve the rural preschool teachers' job satisfaction, we should not only improve economic income level, but also need to focus on the nature of preschool education, paying more attention to teachers' social interactions and affections.

4.2 Further Enhancing and Improving Leadership and Management System Has Important Value to Improve Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Correlation analysis showed that the highest correlations related to overall satisfaction are dimension of in-service development, leadership and management, as well as social reputation. From the stand of preschools, what can be controlled and changed are in-service development, leadership and management. Social reputation condition requires the entire society working together. At the same time, analysis between different teachers shows that although factors, such as title, education, working years, has a certain influence on job satisfaction, but teachers in different preschools different most in job satisfaction. This also could be attributed to different resources in different preschool, and different leadership and management.

Studies have pointed out that organization atmosphere is the direct factor to influence teachers' job satisfaction (Jiang et al., 2006), and the improvement of organizational atmosphere directly depends on leadership and management level in preschool. A number of studies which focused on leadership style and organizational climate have affirmed the influence of leadership and management on teachers' job satisfaction. High level leadership and management not only pay attention to preschool teachers' living conditions and teachers' affection needs, but also improve accountabilities and self efficacies to slow down pressure by improving teachers' abilities while cutting off unnecessary work burdens. Besides, by positive interaction with families and expanding external resources, teachers' satisfaction could be influenced positively.

Satisfaction of in-service development has significantly positive correlation with all other aspects. It can not only help to improve teachers' professional abilities, but also can improve the teachers' job satisfaction. From a practical point of view, there might be a fact that teachers who are able to obtain the opportunity of in-service development are usually important to their organization, so their interrelationship, economic income might be at top. As a result, in-service development is regarded as a special "well-being" for normal teachers. It is not only a confirmation of one's abilities and role status, but also an improvement of could teachers' job satisfaction by expanding external resources especially the supportive social network.

5. Conclusions

Preschool teachers' job satisfaction in impoverished county is not only related to teachers' living conditions and quality of life as professionals, but also related to the enhancement of pre-school education quality and sustainable development. Since 2010, Chinese preschool education makes a leap-forward development. Although the percentage of extremely dissatisfaction is low, the overall situation of job satisfaction of preschool teachers in impoverished county is still imperfect. Meanwhile economic income satisfaction and work condition

are still very low. Therefore, in order to make preschool teachers' professional life and quality better to the betterment of preschool education's overall quality, it is urgent to improve teachers' salaries and their work conditions. What is more, it's also critical to improve organizational atmosphere, management in preschools and teacher in-service training opportunities.

Acknowledgments

This paper is a research result of "Research on the development strategy of Chongqing city under the view of balancing urban and rural preschool education", which is the key funded project of *Chongqing Key Research Institute of Humanities and Social Science City Project* (Project No: 14SKB026).

References

- Bogler, R. (2001). The influence of leadership style on teacher job satisfaction. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 37(5), 662-683. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/214370495?accountid=48841>
- Bogler, R., & Nir, A. E. (2012). The importance of teachers' perceived organizational support to job satisfaction. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 50(3), 287-306. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09578231211223310>
- Chen, Y. Y., & Sun, S. B. (1994). A measurement study of teachers' job satisfaction. *Psychological Science*, (3), 146-149.
- Collie, R. J., Shapka, J. D., & Perry, N. E. (2012). School climate and social-emotional learning: Predicting teacher stress, job satisfaction, and teaching efficacy. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 104(4), 1189. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1149955886?accountid=48841>
- Iwu, C. G., Gwija, S. A., Benedict, H. O., & Tengeh, R. K. (2013). Teacher job satisfaction and learner performance in south Africa. *Journal of Economics and Behavioral Studies*, 5(12), 838-850. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1503663957?accountid=48841>
- Jiang, E. B. (2009). A comparative study of the preschool teachers' job satisfaction in Beijing and Tianjin. *Contemporary preschool education*, (4), 16-18.
- Jiang, Y., et al. (2006). A study on the structure model of teachers' job satisfaction. *Psychological Science*, (1), 162-164.
- Klassen, R. M., & Chiu, M. M. (2010). Effects on teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction: Teacher gender, years of experience, and job stress. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 102(3), 741. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/747888998?accountid=48841>
- Lam, B., & Yan, H. (2011). Beginning teachers' job satisfaction: The impact of school-based factors. *Teacher Development*, 15(3), 333. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/897842283?accountid=48841>
- Landy, F. J. (1989). *Psychology of work behavior* (4th ed.). New York: Wadsworth Inc.
- Nadim, M., Muhammad, S. C., Masood, N. K., & Riaz, T. (2012). Effects of motivational factors on teachers' job satisfaction: A study on public sector degree colleges of punjab, pakistan. *The Journal of Commerce*, 4(4), 25. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1221264426?accountid=48841>
- Recepoglu, E. (2008). The effects of principals' humor on teachers' job satisfaction. *Egitim Ve Bilim*, 33(150), 74. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1009842041?accountid=48841>
- Rodgers, J. F., & Chapman, D. W. (1990). Job satisfaction of elementary school teachers. *International Review of Education*, (36), 299-313.
- Shen, J., Leslie, J. M., Spybrook, J. K., & Ma, X. (2012). Are principal background and school processes related to teacher job satisfaction? A multilevel study using schools and staffing survey 2003-04. *American Educational Research Journal*, 49(2), 200. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/963343746?accountid=48841>
- Tang, G. (2009). The relationship between the career commitment and job satisfaction of college physical education teachers. *Psychological Science*, (2), 475-483.
- Xu, F., & Zhu, C. (2005). Primary and secondary school teachers' professional commitment and its relationship with job satisfaction. *Journal of Teaching and Management*, (7), 18-20.
- Xu, X. C., & Zhang, D. J. (2012). On the relationship between teachers' professional values and job satisfaction: job performance as a mediator. *Journal of Southwest University (Natural Science Edition)*, (4), 134-138.

- Yu, H. Y. (2013). A study on job satisfaction among job-changed preschool teachers in Sichuan Province. *Journal of Chengdu Normal University*, (3), 15-20.
- Zhang, P., & Ge, M. (2013). The relationship between primary and secondary school teachers' teaching efficacy and job satisfaction. *Journal of Teaching and Management*, (10), 22-24.
- Zhang, Y., & Liu, Y. Y. (2008). The emotion regulation types of preschool teachers and their job satisfaction. *Studies in Preschool Education*, (1), 28-31.
- Zhang, Z. S., & Wu, Z. H. (2008). The study on the relationship between the headmasters' leadership behavior and the teachers' job satisfaction. *Psychological Science*, (1), 120-121.

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).