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Effects of Personal Just World Belief on Professional Growth and Well-Being of Preschool Teachers

Han ZHANG¹, Li YOU²

Abstract

A fair and just world is the pursuit of people expecting to be fairly treated. Without such a belief, an individual could hardly devote to pursuing long-term objectives and adapt to irregular social events in daily life. Along with the emphasis of the government and the society on preschool education, preschool teachers, being the practitioners of preschool education, are concerned about the living behavior. The subjective well-being of preschool teachers being the key factor in the working state is gradually focused by researchers. Taking preschool teachers in City A in China as the research objects, total 350 copies of questionnaire are distributed, and 342 copies among the 342 retrieved copies are valid, with the valid rate 97.7%. The research results conclude that 1.just world belief would affect professional growth, 2.just world belief would affect well-being, and 3.professional growth shows remarkably positive effects on well-being. According to the results to propose suggestions, it is expect to enhance the quality of domestic preschool education and promote the healthy growth of children.

Keywords: preschool teacher, preschool education, professional growth, well-being, social environment, social responsibility.

Introduction

A fair and just world is the pursuit of people expecting to be fairly treated and acquire deserved treatment, i.e. everyone being able to receive deserved rewards for anything. To some degree, it presents the meaning of what goes around comes around. The belief in the world being just has an individual believe that the physical and social environment is stable and well-organized. Without such a belief, an

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individual can hardly pursue long-term objectives and adapt to irregular social events in daily life. People, when giving up such a belief and experiencing that the world is not really just or well-organized, might fall into serious worry. For this reason, just world belief is the important adaptability for an individual. Just world belief is essential for personal justice and would mediate the adaptability to mental health. Such a just world belief allows people believing that they would be fairly treated and not become the victims of misfortune. Without such a belief, an individual would hardly pursue long-term objectives and adapt to irregular social events in daily life. Moreover, just world belief also helps people explain the occurred events with meaningful and positive methods that the belief in the world being just plays a primary adaptability function.

It is worth mentioning that preschool teachers, being the practitioners of preschool education, are concerned about the living behavior, along with the emphasis of the government and the society on preschool education. Chen (2014), Lu & Yang (2014), and Yang, Lu, & Ban (2015) considered that the subjective well-being of preschool teachers, as the key factor in the working state, gradually became the focus of researchers. Early in 2010, the development plan of domestic preschool education in *National Outline for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010 - 2020)* definitely pointed out “key development of rural preschool education”. Yang & Zhou (2010) proposed the primary role of preschool teachers in preschool education. In this case, the inspection of preschool teachers’ subjective well-being and the factors presents the significant meaning on the enhancement of the quality of domestic preschool education and the promotion of children’s healthy growth. Accordingly, preschool teachers, as the research objects in this study, as inspected the relationship and the function among just world belief, professional growth, and subjective well-being. It is expected to enhance the quality of domestic preschool education and promote children’s healthy growth.

Literature review

Choi & Kim (2017) regarded just world belief as an individual believing that they were living in a just world. The belief in the world being just allowed an individual believing that the physical and social environment was stable and well-organized. Without such a belief, an individual could hardly pursue long-term objectives and adapt to irregular social events in daily life. People, when giving up such a belief and experiencing that the world was not really just or well-organized, might fall into serious worry. Just world belief therefore was the important adaptability for individuals. Runcoa, Acarb, & Cayirdag (2017) mentioned that research on just world belief regarded it as individual strategy and positive processing mechanism which could cope with pressure and reinforce the

professional growth. In other words, an individual agreed more with personal just world belief showed better positive processing mechanism and higher pressure coping. Ahmad, ., Shaharim, & Abdullah (2017) indicated that an individual agreeing more with personal just world belief would more positively treat the occurred event and present better pressure coping. Under school background or the education and training in schools could positively affect teachers' personality development, reinforce the professional growth, strengthen the strategies to deal with pressure, and support the development of social responsibility. Kuoa *et al.* (2017) indicated that an individual with higher just world belief would be aware of school requirements as challenge, rather than a threat, and confident of the success as well as reveal proper encouragement to present better performance on professional growth. Gajda, Beghetto, & Karwowski (2017) also pointed out the effect of just world belief on pressure related processing procedures, including releasing emotional stress, protecting physical health, and enhancing the motivation of professional growth. As a result, just world belief was regarded as a primary health factor in adjusting challenge and threatening experience under potential pressure. The following hypothesis is therefore proposed in this study.

H1: Just world belief would affect professional growth.

Jiang, Rosenzweig, & Gaspard (2018) pointed out an interesting and important development of just world belief as to regard it as a positive and healthy processing mechanism and proposed that just world belief was essential for individual justice and the mental health adaptability. Meral & Tas (2017) argued that just world belief could predict life satisfaction and well-being, which was independent in Big Five Personality Traits; in other words, just world belief was the important source to support subjective well-being and satisfaction. Similarly, just world belief and pessimism revealed notably negative correlations; i.e. the higher just world belief, the less pessimism of an individual. Brownlee, Ferguson, & Ryan (2017) also found out the relationship between current happiness and the strength of just world belief; those with high just world belief would not be easily irritated and reduce self-esteem, compared to ones with low just world belief. On the contrary, an individual with low just world belief would easily get angry and reduce self-esteem. Perzigia *et al.* (2017) stressed on the effect of just world belief on individual point of view and reconstruction of career courses. An individual would favor and deny unfairness and difference in the group; just world belief was a stable driving force which could help an individual deal with daily quarrel, reduce the possibility of pessimism and pressure to induce illness, and help victims from unfair results. Those believing in just world, in comparison with ones not believing in just world, believed that there would be more well-being after the occurrence of major events. Yuan *et al.* (2017) regarded just world belief as individual strategy to affect the processing procedure with different methods. Several studies also indicated that just world belief played a critical role in individual dealing

with pressure to effectively enhance the well-being. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed in this study.

H2: Just world belief would affect well-being.

Sam (2018) stated that teachers, in social studies, with higher working pressure showed lower perceived teaching well-being. The working pressure of teachers in social studies could effectively predict the teaching well-being, where “professional knowledge” revealed the highest predictive power. Kleiner (2017) pointed out higher well-being of formal elementary school teachers on “life satisfaction”, “physical health”, “positive affectivity”, “work-related professional growth”, and “overall well-being”. Dietrich *et al.* (2017) indicated that elementary school teachers appeared moderate subjective well-being and the major well-being performed on harmonious interpersonal relationship, followed by autonomy, material satisfaction, professional growth, and career achievement; and, subjective well-being showed moderately positive correlations with well-being performance. Variables of autonomy, professional growth, career achievement, and nervousness presented significant predictive power on elementary school teachers’ subjective well-being. Zukovic & Milutinovic (2017) indicated that human behaviors were induced by needs; when needs were satisfied, well-being would be generated and an individual would pursue self-actualization and over actualization as well as the perfect life. In other words, basic needs were the basis of development needs; development needs would not be generated before basic needs being satisfied (or partially satisfied). Olliges (2017) pointed out the guiding function of development needs to basic needs. In sum, teachers would be enhanced the perceived well-being when the basic needs were satisfied to generate well-being and the professional growth was respected and fully self-actualized. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed in this study.

H3: Professional growth presents significantly positive effects on well-being.

Methodology

Measurement of research variable

Just world belief. Referring to Yang (2017), just world belief is measured with a single dimension in this study.

Professional growth. Referring to Chou (2017), the dimensions of preschool teachers’ professional growth are defined as administrative knowledge, professional knowledge, and professional ethics in this study: (1) *Administrative knowledge* - A preschool teacher is not simply an information worker; along with the role change, a preschool teacher has to cultivate the administrative knowledge of other related affairs; (2) *Professional knowledge* - An excellent preschool teacher should present

professional knowledge to complete various services; (3) *Professional ethics*: - Professional ethics refers to the code of ethics and responsibility which should be followed by a profession in the field (e.g. physicians, lawyers, teachers, judges, engineers, accountants, and architects).

Well-being. Referring to Chang *et al.* (2017), well-being contains two dimensions in this study: (1) *Emotional well-being* - including the measurement of positive emotion and the cognition of overall life satisfaction; (2) *Positive functioning* - covering psychological well-being and social well-being.

Research object and sampling data

Taking preschool teachers in City A in China as the research objects, all participants are female and aged 16-55, with the average age 33.59 (SD =8.31). Total 350 copies of questionnaire are distributed, and 342 copies, among 342 retrieved copies, are valid, with the valid rate 97.7%. The retrieved questionnaire is analyzed with SPSS, and factor analysis, reliability analysis, regression analysis, and analysis of variance are utilized for testing various hypotheses.

Analysis method

Analysis of variance is applied in this study to discuss the difference of just world belief in professional growth and well-being, and regression analysis is further used for understanding the relationship between professional growth and well-being.

Results

Reliability and validity analysis

With factor analysis, professional growth in this study is extracted three factors of “administrative knowledge” (eigenvalue=2.633, α =0.84), “professional knowledge” (eigenvalue=2.083, α =0.81), and “professional ethics” (eigenvalue=1.584, α =0.86). The cumulative covariance explained achieves 81.925%.

Well-being in this study is extracted, with factor analysis, two factors of “emotional well-being” (eigenvalue=3.473, α =0.88) and “positive functioning” (eigenvalue=2.291, α =0.91). The cumulative covariance explained reaches 76.647%.

Effects of just world belief on professional growth and well-being

Difference analysis of just world belief to professional growth. Analysis of variance is utilized in this study for discussing the difference of just world belief in professional growth. From *Table 1*, administrative knowledge in professional growth appears remarkable difference in administrative knowledge; and, high just world belief shows higher administrative knowledge than low just world belief. Just world belief reveals notable differences on professional knowledge in professional growth; and, high just world belief shows higher professional knowledge than low just world belief. Just world belief presents significant difference on professional ethics in professional growth; and, high just world belief reveals higher professional ethics than low just world belief. H1 is therefore supported.

Table 1. Difference analysis of just world belief to professional growth

	variable	F	P	Scheffe posteriori test
just world belief	administrative knowledge	13.875	0.000*	high (3.89) >low (3.26)
	professional knowledge	8.617	0.000*	high (4.01) >low (3.66)
	professional ethics	11.253	0.000*	high (4.35) >low (3.72)

* stands for $p < 0.05$.

Difference analysis of just world belief to well-being. According to analysis of variance, the difference of just world belief in well-being is discussed in this study. From *Table 2*, just world belief appears remarkable difference on emotional well-being, and high emotional well-being shows higher just world belief than low just world belief. Just world belief presents notable difference on positive functioning, and high just world belief reveals higher positive functioning than low just world belief. Consequently, H2 is supported.

Table 2. Difference analysis of just world belief to well-being

	variable	F	P	Scheffe posteriori test
just world belief	emotional well-being	7.362	0.000*	high (4.42) >low (3.96)
	positive functioning	10.277	0.000*	high (4.27) >low (3.83)

* stands for $p < 0.05$.

Correlation analysis of professional growth and well-being

To test H3, the analysis results, Table 3, show significant effects of administrative knowledge ($\beta=2.175^{**}$), professional knowledge ($\beta=2.316^{**}$), and professional ethics ($\beta=2.475^{**}$) on emotional well-being. Furthermore, administrative knowledge ($\beta=2.016^{**}$), professional knowledge ($\beta=2.241^{**}$), and professional ethics ($\beta=2.384^{**}$) appear remarkable effects on positive functioning. As a result, H3 is supported.

Table 3. Analysis of professional growth to well-being

dependent variable→	well-being			
independent variable↓	emotional well-being		positive functioning	
professional growth	β	Beta	β	Beta
administrative knowledge	2.175**	0.205	2.016**	0.192
professional knowledge	2.316**	0.224	2.241**	0.216
professional ethics	2.475**	0.237	2.384**	0.227
F	34.182		23.751	
significance	0.000***		0.000***	
R2	0.368		0.241	
adjusted R2	0.324		0.206	

*Note: * stands for $p<0.05$ and ** for $p<0.01$.*

Data source: self-organized in this study

Discussion

The result findings reveal that preschool teachers' just world belief would notably and positively predict the professional growth and positive emotion. It reveals that preschool teachers with higher personal just world belief would enhance the well-being; it is consistent with existing research. It is possibly because of heavy work and low income of preschool teachers; however, the high personal just world belief allows them balancing the feeling between hard work and lower income to present higher satisfaction with life and experience more positive emotion. It is also discovered in this study that either positive or negative coping methods of preschool teachers could positively predict the professional growth and well-being, in spite that the negative coping method shows weaker positive prediction. It is possible that preschool teachers, adopting either positive coping methods of problem solving and asking for help or negative coping methods of escape and self-comfort, would to some degree release the negative emotion when

encountering difficulties, pressure, and frustration and work hard to enhance the professional growth to protect the positive mental health and further promote well-being.

Conclusion

Aiming at the research results, the following suggestions are proposed in this study:

– A preschool teacher should fairly treat each student, but might be inevitably affected by personal subjective awareness to unfairly treat students. In this case, preschool teachers should be timely provided trainings and studies in the teaching fields for promoting the knowledge. Besides, being a member of the school, teachers should notice students' emotion and timely give concern and assistance, no matter whether teachers are acquainted with the students.

– Students, during the childhood, often have the company of preschool teachers that preschool teachers' attitudes would directly affect students. When preschool teachers appear different attitudes, students could easily notice. Since students are from families with distinct background, teachers should keep consistent attitudes and fairness to students, without showing different treatment for students from different families, in order to create the fair classroom climate.

– Education requires learning and experience accumulation. No one is innately able to teach children. It is the situation for teachers and parents, not even mentioning those parents who are for the first time being parents. Parents would unconsciously cause unfair treatment to children in the growth process. To avoid such a problem, parents could enhance personal teaching knowledge through some counseling courses or parent education to promote the positive development of parent-child relationship. Children, regardless of the age, should be noticed the reaction at home and understood the factors in emotional changes for timely control. Timely concerns could prevent children from long-term accumulation of dissatisfactory emotion to result in bad influence.

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