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# **A Study on the Relations among Work Pressure, Emotional Intelligence, and Subjective Well-Being of Kindergarten Teachers**

You LI<sup>1</sup>, Han ZHANG<sup>2</sup>

## **Abstract**

The globalization development of the world allows the economic development presenting knowledge. Talent cultivation is similar to long-term investment that the importance cannot be neglected. Moreover, low birth rate in current society has each child being the treasure of the parents, who spoil the children with permissive parenting and do not realize the immaturity and low self-control of children in the preschool stage to result in children's deviant behaviors and teachers' increasing workload and pressure. Aiming at kindergarten teachers in Jiangsu as the research objects, total 380 copies of questionnaire are distributed, and 277 valid copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 72%. The research results are summarized as below: Kindergarten teachers are general people who have emotion and cannot exercise forbearance for everything. For this reason, school organizations should be considerate of kindergarten teachers' emotional labor problems, parents and the mass society should treat teachers' work with objective perspective and putting themselves in the place. Using individual emotional intelligence to achieve personal emotional accommodation in the process is an important strategy for kindergarten teachers; In the cultivation process, kindergarten teachers stress on evaluating children's level, strength, and weakness for individualized instruction. Step-by-step design of learning content aims to emphasize the importance of rational evaluation. In this case, special education teachers with better emotional intelligence performance could well apply rational evaluation and emotional accommodation strategies, reduce working pressure, and enhance subjective well-being; Kindergarten organizations could properly support teachers with time flexibility to reduce kindergarten teachers dealing with class affairs or other problems with extra time. Cooperation among people would help deal with problems and promote individual positive affect. According to the research results, suggestions are eventually proposed, expecting

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to help kindergarten teachers present higher commitment and better effectiveness on the teaching performance to promote the overall education quality.

*Keywords:* kindergarten, emotional intelligence, working pressure, subjective well-being, social awareness.

## Introduction

Along with time change, modern people experience wealthy life and rich material satisfaction, but become dissatisfied. People's life seems to receive sufficient nourish, while the spirit is not relatively promoted. What is frequently ignored is that physiological problems could be easily discovered, while psychological problems are often neglected. Especially, when such problems appear on teachers in schools, such teachers with mental health problems hiding in schools become a worry in education. It takes ten years to grow trees but a hundred years to educate people; talent cultivation is harsh. In the globalization development of the world, economic development also presents knowledge. Talent cultivation is similar to long-term investment that the importance cannot be neglected. Education is important for individuals and is relatively primary for a nation. Especially, under the wave of education reform and indecisive education policies, teachers show significant effects on students. For this reason, the discussion of teachers' well-being presents the research value.

For educators, the excellence of education quality is the basis of national talent cultivation. A depressed teacher without well-being motive being in school environment and facing complicated education work might appear adverse effects on the psychological well-being; especially, the teaching effectiveness might be reduced when interacting with students in the teaching process. It is discovered in research that objects of research on well-being tend to be students or other occupation, e.g. service industry employees, police officers, and high working pressure groups, while exploration of teachers is little. The discussion of teachers' subjective well-being therefore becomes a research motivation of this study. Furthermore, with low birth rate in current society, each child is the treasure of parents, who spoil the children with permissive parenting and do not realize the immaturity and low self-control of children in the preschool stage to result in children's deviant behaviors and teachers' increasing workload and pressure. Teachers' working pressure would significantly and negatively affect individual teaching efficiency. Under such background, it becomes a primary study to understand the effect of teachers' working pressure on the well-being. This study tends to discuss the relations among kindergarten teachers' working pressure, emotional intelligence, and subjective well-being, expecting to help kindergarten teachers present higher commitment and better effectiveness on the teaching performance to promote the entire education quality.

## Literature review

By comprehending international researchers' studies, Liu *et al.* (2019) revealed that large amount of emotional burden at work was the major factor in working pressure. Thompson (2018) stated that work contained large interaction among people, including interaction among employees and between supervisors and employees. Besides, due to professional characteristics, people had to depress or accommodate personal emotions for proper emotional expression. Emotional intelligence therefore was important for employees. In regard to the relations between emotional intelligence and working pressure, Indregard *et al.* (2018) revealed that junior high school teachers, in Taipei City, with higher emotional expression, accommodation, empathy, and emotional perception perceived lower working pressure from student behavior, work load, adaptation to change, interpersonal relations, and administrative support. In the research on high school teachers, Nisar *et al.* (2019) revealed that teachers with higher emotional awareness, emotional expression, and emotional accommodation showed lower perception of work load, administrative support, student performance, interpersonal relations, and self-expected working pressure. Becker *et al.* (2018) studied junior high and elementary school special education teachers' emotion management and working pressure and found out negative correlations between interpersonal relations and overall emotion management. It revealed that teachers with better performance on emotion management appeared lower stress response on interpersonal relations. Kotsou *et al.* (2019) studied special education school teachers and pointed out negative correlations between emotional awareness, emotional accommodation, emotional empathy, emotional expression and working pressure, professional knowledge and skills, interpersonal relations. In the study on vocational high school special education teachers, Yan *et al.* (2018) revealed negative correlations between emotional intelligence and interpersonal relations in working pressure, professional growth as well as negative correlations between emotion regulation, emotional empathy and teaching mentoring. As a result, it is assume in this study that

*H1: Emotional intelligence presents negative and significant effects on working pressure.*

Phang, Fan, & Arbona (2018) revealed that emotional intelligence (EI) could effectively predict well-being. EI, as the cover of TIME in 1995, was emphasized the importance as the success indicator. Vermooten, Boonzaier, & Kidd (2019) indicated that ones with high emotional intelligence outperformed those with high intelligence quotient on happiness value of life and feeling of success. Lewinsohn (2019), in the research on 125 college students' well-being and emotional intelligence, found out remarkably positive correlations between emotional intelligence and well-being. Moreo *et al.* (2019) regarded the

development of emotional competence as the key in realizing well-being that it was necessary to take emotional education into account in education programs. Zhao & Guo (2019) pointed out notably positive effects of emotional intelligence, including self-consciousness, self-management, motivation, social consciousness, and relationship management, on learning performance. It explained the higher perception of principal emotional intelligence, the higher well-being and further inferred the close relationship between principal emotional intelligence and well-being. Diener *et al.* (2018) regarded emotional intelligence as a primary choice for well-being; emotional cognition and handling abilities could better determine a person's success and well-being than traditional intelligence quotient (IQ). Park *et al.* (2018) considered that people with high emotional intelligence presented high effectiveness on self-consciousness, emotion management, and self-motivation. Kamassi *et al.* (2019) proposed significant correlations between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy. Yao *et al.* (2018) revealed that teachers could reduce job burnout by enhancing emotional intelligence to further enhance the sense of work accomplishment in teaching tasks; a principal was indeed a member of teachers that the development of high emotional intelligence could enhance self-performance, affirm self-value, and enhance the satisfaction with self-acceptance. The close correlations between a principal's emotional intelligence and well-being and "self-satisfaction" therefore could be inferred. The following hypothesis further is proposed in this study

*H2: Working pressure shows negative and remarkable effects on subjective well-being.*

Lee *et al.* (2018) revealed that work would present high well-being and reduce psychological distress. Williams (2018) also discovered that career women presented higher mental health and life satisfaction than housewives. In medicine related research, Dishop *et al.* (2019) discovered, from studies on nurses' working pressure and physical and mental health, that most nurses perceived heavy working pressure and workload and were dissatisfied with mental health, vitality, and general health; however, more than a half nurses considered higher work control, and most of them perceived good interpersonal relations and job satisfaction. Rivki, Diestel, & Schmidt (2018) indicated that an individual with a job would have higher life satisfaction and mental health to enhance the well-being; however, it was inevitable to appear pressure in life and not always be smooth at work. From Coe & Salanova's (2018) research on married female teachers and leisure participation, leisure satisfaction, well-being, it was discovered that working pressure was the major life pressure for junior high school married female teachers and working pressure was correlated with well-being. In the research on junior high school teacher-counselors' working pressure, coping strategy, and negative emotion, Shapoval (2019) pointed out the higher perceived working pressure, the more experience in negative emotion. In the research on elementary school teachers' well-being, Kong & Jeon (2018) pointed out negative effects of working

pressure on teachers' well-being. Lee & Madera (2019) discussed elementary school teachers' leisure participation, working pressure, and well-being and found out negative effects of working pressure on teachers' well-being. Wu *et al.* (2018) studied the factors in teachers' depression tendency and discovered the factors of working pressure and working pressure load. Accordingly, it is assumed in this study that

*H3: Emotional intelligence reveals positive effects on subjective well-being.*

## Methodology

### *Operational definition*

*Emotional intelligence*: Referring to Zhang *et al.* (2019), emotional intelligence in this study contains four dimensions of "self-awareness", "self-management", "social awareness", and "relationship management".

- 1) Self-awareness: Self-awareness refers to clearly know emotional context and distinguish the difference between fact and perception to further understand personal advantages and disadvantages and develop personal advantages to present self-confidence.
- 2) Self-management: Self-management stresses on a principal being able to control the emotion, keep rational and flexible, not fear for challenge, honestly express personal feelings, opinions, and behaviors, and urge himself/herself on pursuing performance excellence.
- 3) Social awareness: Social awareness refers to emotional empathy to understand others' opinions with magnanimous attitudes and find out members' needs to give assistance.
- 4) Relationship management: Relationship management refers to a principal's leadership to inspire members, encourage employees' potential, well apply conflict management, trigger the courage and ability to change, establish mutual trust network, and cohere teamwork.

*Working pressure*: Referring to Chen, Chang, & Wang (2019), working pressure in this study contains three dimensions of job factor, organization factor, and career development.

- 1) Job factor: Job factors are related to work characteristics, e.g. technical use, heavy workload, work requirement, work uncertainty, dull work, and low autonomy.
- 2) Organization factor: Organizational factors are related to work role, including role conflict, role ambiguity, and organization and role cognition difference.
- 3) Career development: Working pressure of career development

contains job security, promotion, career goal, welfare system, and sense of accomplishment.

*Subjective well-being:* Referring to Wen, Huang, & Hou (2019), subjective well-being in this study covers two dimensions.

- 1) Emotional well-being: including measurement of positive emotion, cognition of overall life satisfaction.
- 2) Positive functioning: containing psychological well-being, social well-being.

### *Research sample and object*

Aiming at kindergarten teachers in Jiangsu, as the research objects, total 380 copies of questionnaire are distributed, and 277 valid copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 72%.

### *Reliability and validity test*

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is an important part in SEM. When preceding CFA, the measurement model should be first tested in the structural model evaluation with two-stage model correction. When the measurement model fit is acceptable, the second step SEM is preceded. CFA in this study reveals the factor loadings of dimensions in .65~.90, composite reliability in .75~.90, and average variance extracted in .60~.80, conforming to the standards of 1.factor loading higher than .5, 2.composite reliability higher than .6, and 3.average variance extracted higher than .5. The dimensions therefore present convergent validity.

## **Results**

### *Structural model analysis*

Structural model analysis covers the analysis of research model fit and the explanatory power of overall research model. 7 numerical indicators, referring to experts' opinions, are therefore used for testing the overall model fit, including chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test,  $\chi^2$ -degree of freedom ratio, goodness of fit index, adjusted goodness of fit index, root mean square error, comparative fit index, hypothesis model comparison, and chi-square difference of independent model. The overall result analysis is organized in *Table 1*.

Using  $\chi^2$ -degree of freedom ratio for testing model fit, the ratio should be smaller. The  $\chi^2$ -degree of freedom ratio of this research model appears <3 (1.25). GFI and AGFI are better close to 1, and has not absolute standard to judge the fit; GFI > 0.90 and AGFI > 0.80 are acceptable. GFI and AGFI of this research model

show 0.95 and 0.87, respectively. RMSEA in 0.05-0.08 reveals a good model with reasonable fit; RMSEA of this research model shows .06. The allowable standard of CFI is > 0.90; CFI of this research model reveals 0.92. NFI should be at least higher than 0.90; NFI of this research model appears 0.90. Overall speaking, the fit indices conform to the standards, revealing the acceptable research results. The research sample data therefore could be used for explaining the actual observation data.

From previous overall model fit indices, it presents favorable fit between the model structured in this study and observation data, showing that the theoretical model could fully explain the observation data. In this case, the correlation coefficient and coefficient estimate of emotional intelligence to working pressure and subjective well-being could be further understood, after passing the model fit test.

Table 1. Model fit analysis

Fit Indices	Allowable range	This research model	Model fit judgment
$\chi^2$ (Chi-square)	the smaller the better	19.62	
$\chi^2$ -degree of freedom ratio	<3	1.25	match
GFI	>0.90	0.95	match
AGFI	>0.80	0.87	match
RMSEA	<0.08	0.06	match
CFI	>0.90	0.92	match
NFI	>0.90	0.90	match

The research data are organized in Table 2. The complete model analysis results reveal that four dimensions of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management) could significantly explain emotional intelligence ( $t > 1.96$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), three dimensions of working pressure (job factor, organization factor, career development) could remarkably explain working pressure ( $t > 1.96$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and two dimensions of subjective well-being (emotional well-being, positive functioning) could notably explain subjective well-being ( $t > 1.96$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Apparently, the overall research model presents favorable preliminary fit.

In terms of internal fit, emotional intelligence shows negative and remarkable correlations with working pressure (-0.85,  $p < 0.01$ ), working pressure reveals negative and notable correlations with subjective well-being (-0.83,  $p < 0.01$ ), while emotional intelligence appears positive and significant correlations with subjective well-being (0.88,  $p < 0.01$ ) that H1, H2, and H3 are supported.



Table 2. Overall linear structural model analysis result

Evaluation item	parameter/evaluation standard	result	
Preliminary fit	emotional intelligence	self-awareness	0.68*
		self-management	0.73**
		social awareness	0.71**
		relationship management	0.67*
	working pressure	job factor	0.74**
		organization factor	0.72**
		career development	0.77**
	subjective well-being	emotional well-being	0.76**
positive functioning		0.74**	
Internal fit	emotional intelligence→working pressure	-0.85***	
	working pressure→subjective well-being	-0.83***	
	emotional intelligence→subjective well-being	0.88***	

Note: \* stands for  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* for  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* for  $p < 0.001$ .

## Discussion

The research results reveal that kindergarten teachers, under high pressure, might easily release the temper, but forget to show the stabilization skills. Consequently, kindergarten teachers, in order to enhance emotional intelligence, have to stress on the daily practice of positive thinking awareness and distinguish the difference between emotions and facts to keep the regulation space and leave space for personal rhythm. In this case, they could shift the emotional focus and let go the insistence. Proper diet and regular exercise could also enhance personal positive energy to consider the overall of things. Positive thinking could enhance self-emotion management. Kindergarten organizations could adjust the time for properly supporting teachers and reducing kindergarten teachers dealing with class affairs or other problems with extra time. Cooperation among people could help handle problems and promote individual positive emotion. Kindergarten organizations being willing to support kindergarten teachers would have kindergarten teachers be more willing to involve in the teaching, present extra contribution, and show cohesion with the organization.

## Conclusion

The research results reveal that kindergarten teachers often invest large amount of efforts in children to see the slight progress. In face of low learning motivation as well as hyperactivity and emotional problems of children, they require larger flexibility and time for making progress. Especially, kindergarten teachers, in the mass society, are expected to present love, concern, and tolerance; however, kindergarten teachers are general people who have emotions and could not exercise forbearance for everything. Accordingly, school organizations should be considerate of kindergarten teachers' emotional labor problems and parents and the mass society should objectively treat teachers' work content by putting themselves in the position. It is an important strategy for kindergarten teachers using personal emotional intelligence for emotional accommodation in the process. In the cultivation process of kindergarten teachers, it is emphasized to evaluate children's level, strengths and weaknesses for personalized teaching. Step-by-step design of learning content stresses on the importance of rational evaluation. As a result, special education teachers with better emotional intelligence performance could well apply rational evaluation and emotional accommodation strategies to reduce working pressure and promote subjective well-being.

### *Recommendations*

By organizing the research results and findings, the following practical suggestions are further proposed.

- Current teacher training courses focus on teaching materials and methods, subject professional knowledge, student educational psychology, and educational test. According to research, kindergarten teachers' emotional intelligence would affect job satisfaction, sense of accomplishment, and even children's learning performance. For this reason, reinforcing kindergarten teachers' pressure management and emotional intelligence abilities to have kindergarten teachers present larger power to face challenges in the educational sites would be win-win for children and teachers.
- Similar to educational policies changing from intellectual education to the concern about children's affection and personality education, kindergarten teachers' "soft power" should be the focus. In addition to course training, kindergarten teachers should be offered empowerment seminars and concerned about the mental health to assist kindergarten teachers in better coping with pressure.
- This study shows the importance of emotional intelligence for kindergarten teachers' pressure. It is primary for kindergarten teachers presenting good emotional intelligence to deal with pressure. Moreover, the research results also reveal the better emotional intelligence performance, the less working

pressure. Kindergarten teachers need to interact and get along with children for long period as well as mutually help and grow with other teachers. For this reason, kindergarten teachers being able to enhance personal emotional intelligence could correctly deal with pressure and reduce interpersonal pressure. As a consequence, kindergarten teachers should promote personal emotional intelligence through emotion management courses, seminars, or reference books and channels in the market.

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