

Personality Traits and Job Involvement of Novice Kindergarten Teachers in Zhejiang Province China: Towards a Sustainable Workforce Development

Yu Wang^{1, a}, Lydia Foong Yoke-Yean^{2, b}, Noryati Alias^{2, c}

¹Faculty of Education SEGI University, Kota Damansara, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia

²Faculty of Education SEGI University, Kota Damansara, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia

³Faculty of Education SEGI University, Kota Damansara, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia

^a631268760@qq.com, ^blydiafoong@segi.edu.my, ^cnoryatialias@segi.edu.my

Abstract: In China, there is an increasing attention in the quality of preschool education due to the recent social and economic development. The teaching workforce is the key to quality preschool education, and the level of competency and professionalism will affect the development of preschool education and the sustainability of its workforce. With the increase in expectations for preschool teachers in China, there is a need to ensure that right candidates are selected for the job. Hence, the study on the relationship between the preschool teachers' personality traits and their job involvement is necessary. Many studies have found personality traits factors (extraversion, neuroticism, openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness) to have an impact on kindergarten teachers' job involvement. However, research on personality traits and job involvement of novice kindergarten teachers is an undeveloped research area in China. This study will explore the relationship between personality traits, and job involvement of novice kindergarten teachers in Zhejiang Province, China. The data was analysed using SPSS 26.0. Results of this study suggest that the five factor model is useful for examining the dispositional source of job involvement. The analyses which mean that it is logical to think there is a significant relation between personality traits and job involvement. The results of this study will aid policy makers, Ministry of Education, kindergarten management as well as researchers on the effective implementation of policies and practices that could improve preschool teachers' overall quality and teaching effectiveness in China.

Keywords: Personality traits, job involvement, novice kindergarten teachers.

1. Introduction

Early childhood education system around the world are facing many challenges as a result of the social, political, economic development; the interests and demands of the public; the calls for transformation the post pandemic world, as well as the local and international developments (Zhu & Zhang, 2008; Qi & Melhush, 2017; Cameron & Moss, 2020). In China, preschool education is receiving more attention than before. As preschool education for the three to six years is not part of the universal education system. Provisions are still patchy and childcare services (0-3 years) are less than adequate (Qi & Melhush, 2017). The services provided are not accessible to all children, especially the children in the rural areas. There is a shortage of qualified preschool teachers in many provinces (Jiang, Pang & Sun, 2017). Culturally, many Chinese parents have held high expectations on their children's early learning and academic success in later studies (Li, 2006). Hence, a high-quality preschool service has fast become a contentious issue. In recent years, many issues that surfaced including child abuse incidents involving kindergarten teachers that were exposed by the media have also increased parents and society's concerns about the personal qualities and mental health of kindergarten teachers (Lyu, Chow & Hwang, 2020). The overall quality of kindergarten teachers in China is low, and so is its social status and employment conditions. The workforce is unable to meet the societal demands and expectations for quality preschool education.

In recent years, the publication of relevant documents has not

only proven the importance of the state for early childhood education, but also put forward new requirements for kindergarten teachers (Bakken, Brown & Downing, 2017). The nation's long-term education reform and development plans has stipulated that the social status and the remuneration of kindergarten teachers that has to be implemented according to the prescribed regulations, along with an expectation of a higher level of professional conduct for kindergarten teachers. In this context, the conduct and professionalism, job involvement, as well as the state of mental health of kindergarten teachers have become a contentious issue in preschool education. All preschool teachers are required to undergo professional training, comply to professional ethics, and are competent in knowledge and professional skills (Jiang, Pang & Sun, 2017). It is necessary to pay attention to the professional development of novice teachers as they are an important part of the kindergarten workforce and are directly impacting the quality of preschool education. Studies have found that teachers with higher levels of job involvement, apart from self-interest in their own work, will have a strong sense of identity with work and the organization that can improve work performance (Chen, 2015).

Neuroticism employees also are less likely to devote themselves to work and more likely to be distracted easily, which increases their behavioral risks and suggests a positive relationship between insufficient work efficiency and neuroticism (Smither, London, & Richmond, 2005).

Smithikrai (2007) indicated that neuroticism has a significant negative correlation with job success; in the future, neurotic employees may be even less productive at work as

globalization and technological advances induce changes in organizational life.

Varca(2004) predicted that when people are highly extroverted, they usually provide services ahead of time. Smithikrai(2007) found a positive relationship between extraversion and job success, especially in jobs that require interpersonal contacts.

High openness may prompt job efficiency, because work enables these employees to satisfy their curiosity, explore new viewpoints, and develop real interests in their activities which may increase the importance of openness for ensuring positive work efficiency (Lounsbury & Crumley, 2007).

2. Literature Review

The United Nations (2015) has outlined the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) of the 2030 Agenda which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030. SDG provides some guidelines to governments on how to plan appropriate action to ensure the education for all agenda is met (Education 2030 Framework for Action). This includes SDG 4C where governments are to substantially increase the percentage of teachers qualified according to national standards by education level and type of institution so that quality education services can be enjoyed by every child in an inclusive and equitable manner. There are many factors that contribute to quality in preschool education such as curriculum, qualifications, working conditions, families and community engagement. In general, quality can be divided into process and structural quality. The dimensions in process quality affect the daily nature of the early childhood settings and directly affect the quality of the day-to-day experience of a child, including child outcomes (Ishimine, Bennett, and Collette, 2010). Structural quality contributes to the quality in preschool education, for instance, facilities, staff-to-child ratios, and qualifications of the staff (Ishimine, Tayler, and Thorpe, 2009; OECD, 2006).

The quality of the teacher influences the process quality in terms of the teaching and learning processes and the interactions between the teacher and the children in class. The results of empirical studies indicate that the personality features influence the personal values and attitudes of an individual, and thus will affect one’s job involvement. (Olver and Mooradian, 2003).

Personality refers to consistent cognitive and behavioural habits across time and in different contexts (e.g. Cattell, 1965). Neuroticism people tend to have a negative attitude to life than other individuals (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002). This type of person is very sensitive to the ridicule of others, and has a tendency to inferiority. If such a person exists in the group, it will make everyone feel uncomfortable. Compared with other people, this kind of person cannot bear pressure. Every time they encounter pressure, they feel lonely, helpless, and panic (Janes & Olson, 2000).

Fang Meiyu (2002) defines extroversion as the degree to which a person is comfortable with others; if the degree of comfort between a person and others is higher, it means the person is more extroverted. The main characteristics of this trait person are initiative, self-confidence, like performance and making friends, active, lively and outgoing.

The main characteristics of this trait include: imagination and curiosity, open mind, like to think and seek new changes. Open-minded workers are more creative, often have innovative ideas, like to think about new things, but also to

feel inside, and experience deeper (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Such people find it easy to establish friendship with others (Digman & Inouye, 1986), and this person’s concept of treating others is the doctrine of human nature. They believe that people are kind and have good intentions.

McCrae and Costa (1999) defines rigor as the concentration of the goals pursued; if the individual is more focused on the goal pursued, the degree of rigor is higher. The characteristics of this trait include: hard work, regularity, perseverance, achievement orientation, responsible discipline, and a sense of responsibility.

Allport (1961) believes that personality is the dynamic organization of the psychological system, a unique formation of individuals adapting to the external environment, and traits are a continuous aspect (for example: achievement needs, sociality, independence, etc.). It is used to explain the consistency of individual behavior in different situations (Gatewood & Field, 1998). The behavior of an individual reflects its unique personality characteristics, such as shyness, aggressiveness, obedience, laziness, loyalty or timidity, and so forth. If these characteristics continue to appear in many different situations, we call them *Personality Traits*. Therefore, *Personality Traits* are stable throughout a person’s life and are an important component (Costa & McCrae, 1999). Lodahl and Kejner (1965)’s concept of job involvement integrated the two concepts of Ego-Involvement by Dubin (1958) and Central Life Interests by Allport (1947). Allport believes that seeking the dignity of self and others in the work situation, and formally investing in the psychological phenomenon of the work involved; that is, Ego-Involvement, is the state of personal commitment to one’s work.

Many studies have found personality traits to be associated with job involvement. A meta-analysis on personality and job involvement suggests that emotional stability prompts greater job proficiency across occupations (Clarke & Robertson, 2005), whereas neuroticism should be associated with lower job efficiency. Barrick & Mount (1991) revealed that a neurotic personality experiences anxiety, depression, anger, insecurity, and worry, which tend to create negative opinions. A neurotic employee probably does not have positive attitudes toward work and may lack confidence and optimism, which should result in less ambition and less focus on career goals. Therefore, a negative relationship likely exists between neuroticism and goal direction (Malouff et al., 1990), such that low goal trends should be due to low work efficiency.

Neurotic employees are found to be less likely to devote themselves to work and more likely to be distracted easily, which increases their behavioral risks and suggests a positive relationship between insufficient work efficiency and neuroticism. In addition, when a person possesses high neuroticism, he or she likely considers feedback a type of threat that produces anxiety and overly intense stimuli (Smither, London, & Richmond, 2005).

Smithikrai(2007) found that neuroticism has a significant negative correlation with job success; in the future, neurotic employees may be even less productive at work as globalization and technological advances induce changes in organizational life. Niehoff(2006) notes also that neuroticism appears consistently negatively correlated with leadership emergence and effectiveness. Thus, the neuroticism dimension should be able to predict task-based criteria, such as quantity and quality of work. According to deductive reasoning then, neuroticism should correlate negatively with

job involvement.

Varca (2004) predicted that when people are highly extroverted, they usually provide services ahead of time. Smithikrai(2007) found a positive relationship between extraversion and job success, especially in jobs that require interpersonal contacts. Berg & Feij (2003) found extroverted employees to make better use of their competencies than employees with low extraversion, which enables them to increase their self-efficacy, and in turn leads to better work efficacy. Considering these results and the findings on work efficacy for project work, an extroverted disposition appears critical for advancing job involvement.

High openness may prompt job efficiency, because work enables these employees to satisfy their curiosity, explore new viewpoints, and develop real interests in their activities. Therefore, they likely distinguish important work activities and combine their observations with appropriate behavior to develop a work method that maximizes productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness. Moreover, as work fields expand and technological changes proliferate, there is likely to be greater demand for productive workers who are aware of new developments and engage in continuing education and professional growth, which may increase the importance of openness for ensuring positive work efficiency (Lounsbury et al., 2007).

Robinowitz and Hall (1977) proposed that job involvement is regarded as a dependent variable of personal characteristics. Research by Chen (2005), Li (2006), Ye (2008) and others also show a significant positive correlation between the overall personality traits and overall job involvement of the staff, although job involvement may also be affected by factors other than the personality traits, such as professional identity. From the literature, it can be seen that personal personality traits have a significant positive impact on job involvement.

3. Methodology

3.1. Purpose of the Study

The research population consist of the novice kindergarten teachers in Zhejiang Province. There are 8261 kindergartens in the province, with 1.937 million children in kindergartens, an increase of 0.2% over the previous year. There were 135,000 full-time teachers in kindergartens, an increase of 6,000 over the previous year (The People's Government of Zhejiang Province; 2020).

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between personality traits and job involvement of novice kindergarten teachers in Zhejiang Province, China. The research questions are

- a. *How to define the Personality Traits and Job Involvement?*
- b. *What is the relationship between personality traits and job involvement of novice kindergarten teachers?*

Data collection will be done using self-administered questionnaire. Also, self-administer questionnaires provide a better and higher response rate, hence this method was applied as opposed to mailed questionnaire. According to Rubin and Babbie (2010, p. 384)

3.2. Sample

The target research population consist of the novice kindergarten teachers in Zhejiang Province. There are 8261 kindergartens in the province, with 1.937 million children in kindergartens. There is an increase of 0.2% in the children attending kindergarten compared to the previous year. There

were 135,000 full-time teachers in kindergartens, an increase of 6,000 over the previous year (The People's Government of Zhejiang Province; 2020).

3.3. Data Collection Method

This study uses the quantitative correlational method to examine the relationship between variables - personality traits and job involvement. The relationships will be measured quantitatively using recognized and validated survey instruments. A quantitative method was chosen for this study because these variables could be measured and examined numerically (Bryman, 2012), and the researcher attempted to explore the relationships, if any, between personality traits and job involvement (Curry, Nembhard, & Bradley, 2009). The data was collected using an online (?) self-administered questionnaire. A self-administered questionnaire provide a better and higher response rate, hence this method was applied as opposed to mailed questionnaire (Rubin and Babbie, 2010, p. 384).

3.4. Measures

The list of questions in this questionnaire is based on 1) Big Five Inventory (BFI)/Six Facets of personality traits by McCrae and Costa (1999) aimed to discover one's personality traits And 2) Lodahl and Kejner's 20-item Job Involvement scale. Item responses for the first four samples were based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), to 5 (strongly agree). Item responses in the fifth sample used a 4-point scale with identical response options, with the exception that the neutral response was not used: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree). This difference in scales may result in some discrepancies in the result between this sample and the others (e.g., due to diminished variance). Although this difference should be considered in evaluating the evidence, we did not feel it warranted removal of the sample. All negatively worded items were reverse-scored prior to any analyses. Previous research has reported the coefficient alpha reliability estimate to vary from .62 to .93 (Blau, 1985).

3.5. Data Collection

Sekaran (2003) stated that in research, sampling size is important in drawing a generalised conclusion of the target population size. The next step was to determine the sample size. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a formula was developed to show the expected sample size of the population of the study in order to simplify the process of determining the sample size. This ensured that the researcher was able to obtain a representative sample of the study. In order to strengthen the authenticity of the research, this research adopts random sampling.

Data collection will be done using self-administered questionnaire. The researcher received an approval from the Kindergartens Ethics Board before the data was collected to ensure that the procedures used in the study were appropriate. The sample was drawn from kindergartens in Zhejiang Province. Students were sent the online survey letter with an informed consent form. Participants who were interested in participating in the study were asked to fill in the survey questionnaire. Confidentiality and anonymity were enforced throughout the invitation letter.

Krejcie and Morgan (1970) stated that "as the population increases, the sample sizes increases at a diminishing rate and remains relatively constant at slightly more than 380 cases"

(p. 607). A sample size of 600 novice kindergarten teachers is obtained using the formula by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Finally, I distributed 1,000 questionnaires and recovered 923 questionnaires. And as shown the reality in the Table I.

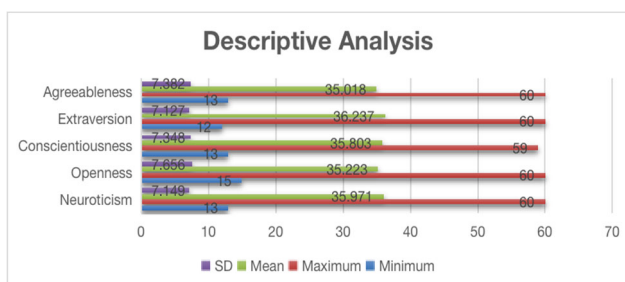
Instrument	Author(s)	Theory Source	Cronbach's alpha
Personality Traits	McCrae & Costa	Big Five Inventory	0.96
Job Involvement	Lodahl & Kejner	20-item scale	0.92

3.6. Data Analysis

The researcher utilized the Statistic Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 26.0 for all statistical analyses required in this study. The variables correlated were the Big five (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) and job involvement among these individuals. The use of validated instruments warranted the researcher's assumption that the data collected for this study were valid and reliable. The Likert scales used to collect the data were approximated to continuous measures. The researcher added to the survey questionnaire a component that collected demographic information used to develop a sample profile in terms of participants' age, gender, and so on. The data analysis began with data cleansing by running frequencies in SPSS 26.0 on the raw data. Data cleaning involved checking the data file for missing data and values that were out of range. Then, to compute the data on the personality factors, mean scores were computed from the survey results for each factor (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism). To compute the data on job involvement, the mean scores were computed from the job involvement survey results. Entries with outliers were filtered out of the data analyses. Descriptive statistics were presented for the demographic characteristics, for each of the variables. The Data Analysis Procedure section contains detailed descriptions of these analyse.

4. Findings

According to this study, participant agreeableness mean was 35.018. Extraversion mean was 36.237. Conscientiousness mean was 35.803. Openness mean was 35.233. Neuroticism mean was 35.971. Scores along different dimensions, in descending order, were: extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, openness and agreeableness. All dimensions are in a stable state.



Figures 1. Descriptive Analysis of Personality Traits

The t-test results of personality traits and job involvement on

gender showed that the t-value of personality traits was 4.658**, and $p < .01$ indicated that there was a significant difference. The t value of job involvement is 4.516**, and $p < .01$ indicates a significant difference.

Variables	Gender	t value
Personality Traits	Male	4.658**
	Female	
Job Involvement	Male	4.516**
	Female	

The results of one-way analysis of variance between personality traits and job involvement on age showed that the F value of personality traits was 16.94**, and $p < .01$ indicated significant differences. The F value of job involvement is 9.677**, and $p < .01$ indicates a significant difference.

Variables	Age	F
Personality Traits	17-20 years old	16.94**
	21-24 years old	
	25-28 years old	
	29-32 years old	
Job Involvement	17-20 years old	9.677**
	21-24 years old	
	25-28 years old	
	29-32 years old	

The t-test results of personality traits and job involvement on whether or not they have participated in teacher training show that the t value of personality traits is 0.970, and $p < .01$ indicates that there is a significant difference. The t value of job involvement is 0.248, and $p < .01$ indicates that there is a significant difference.

Variables	Training Programme	t value
Personality Traits	yes	0.970
	no	
Job Involvement	yes	0.248
	no	

Correlation analysis investigates the relationships among the variables simultaneously and produces a correlation matrix that clarifies the relationship patterns for the personality traits and job involvement (Table V).

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Neuroticism	1					
Openness	-0.656***	1				
Conscientiousness	-0.666***	0.668***	1			
Extraversion	-0.649***	0.621***	0.646***	1		
Agreeableness	-0.650***	0.636***	0.632***	0.624***	1	
Job involvement	-0.807***	0.790***	0.791***	0.788***	0.790***	1

The analyses were conducted with SPSS 26.0 Results of this study suggest that the five factor model is a useful tool for examining the dispositional source of job involvement. The bivariate correlation analyses were used to test the hypotheses. The predictions of the hypotheses were all supported. Job involvement dimensions were found highly correlated with big five factors and these correlations were statistically significant ($p < .01$). The results of the correlation analyses indicated that extraversion ($r = .788, p < .01$), agreeableness ($r = .790, p < .01$), conscientiousness ($r = .791, p < .01$) and openness ($r = .790, p < .01$) were positively and significantly correlated with job involvement. Neuroticism as a model was negative correlated with job involvement ($r = .807, p < .01$).

5. Discussion

The study investigated the relationship between the big - five of personality and job involvement. Results of this study suggest that the five factor model is useful for examining the dispositional source of job engagement. All hypotheses were proved according to the correlation analyses which mean that it is logical to think there is a significant relation between personality traits and job involvement. Openness has become a prior personality trait because of the rapidly changing nature of current working life. Novice kindergarten teachers who adapt themselves to the changes can be more engaged to their job. Agreeableness is needed to work in peace and resolve the conflicts. Agreeable novice kindergarten teachers can be more positive and motivated to resolve the problems and conflicts. Therefore agreeable novice kindergarten teachers can be more engaged to their job because they can save their energy and flow it to their work roles. More researches needs to be done with other samples for further studies to compare the results.

6. Conclusion & Recommendations

From the perspective of personality traits, we can more accurately understand the true thoughts of every kindergarten teacher and whether their professional abilities are qualified for the job. The results of this study emphasize the importance of personality traits to job involvement. Therefore, we must pay special attention to this point when recruiting kindergarten teachers in the future. It is very optimistic that the results of this study will prove to help kindergartens choose more suitable and excellent preschool teachers. In order to ensure a sustainable workforce development for preschool teachers, the recommendations are

- 1 Novice kindergarten teachers pay attention to the psychological courses during the university. Guide novice teachers to develop in sunlight, cheerful, positive energy.
- 2 Before novice kindergarten teachers work, the kindergartens will prepare a series of courses in improving professional abilities. Let the novice teachers understand the job content and job environment that will face in a comprehensive detail, early psychological construction.
3. Inside the kindergartens can have a psychological

counseling studio, properly solve the working pressure of novice kindergarten teachers and eliminate negative energy. The results of my research prove that in the group of novice preschool teachers, novice preschool teachers are not self-confident in themselves or because of their own personality, they have low work commitment; they have a low degree of recognition of the work; they have limited professional ability in the work. I suspect that these problems arise because there are certain problems in the process of being educated by kindergarten teachers. Maybe this kind of education method is unsustainable to train novice preschool teachers and needs improvement. In my next research, I will study the current education system of kindergarten teachers in China, and use experiments to prove that the training of kindergarten teachers needs a system of sustainable development.

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