



Research on the Current Situation and Countermeasures of Occupational Stress for Newly Hired Preschool Teachers

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Abstract: Nowadays, the professional pressure of early childhood teachers is increasing, especially for newly hired teachers. This study mainly uses reference literature and questionnaire surveys to understand the occupational stress of newly hired early childhood teachers, identify the factors affecting their occupational stress, and finally proposes strategies to alleviate their occupational stress based on the current situation and causes, promoting their physical and mental health and professional development

Keywords: preschool teacher, professional stress, coping strategies

1 INTRODUCTION

Numerous studies have shown that the high professional pressure of preschool teachers has become the norm. For a long time, preschool teachers have held a low status, not comparable to junior high school teachers, and even society as a whole has held certain prejudices against them. They believe the threshold for preschool teachers is low, the knowledge required is minimal, and they teach preschool children. As long as they have enough patience and experience, and as long as they watch their children and have fun with them, anyone can become a kindergarten teacher. Based on this social understanding, it is often believed that preschool teachers cannot possibly face any professional pressure. But in reality, preschool teachers not only face pressure but also face significant professional pressure [3]. With the rapid development of preschool education, the professional competence requirements for preschool teachers are rising. Related research shows that excessive work pressure for newly hired preschool teachers leads to low mood, insomnia, irritability, reduced work efficiency, and even professional burnout, low work enthusiasm, and low job happiness. Over time, this not only causes great harm to their physical and mental health, but more importantly, affects the healthy growth of young children. The "Guidelines" clearly state: Teachers are supporters, collaborators, and guides of children's learning activities. Therefore, it is necessary to build a stable and highly capable preschool teacher team. The causes of occupational stress for novice teachers are an issue we should focus on. This article aims to investigate the current state of occupational stress

among newly hired preschool teachers, understand the real situation, and further promote a rational view of stress. It enables them to adjust their mindset using appropriate methods, recognize stress appropriately, handle it correctly, and even turn it into motivation to find ways to relieve it. This helps them correctly understand their profession, excel in early childhood education, and better cultivate the flowers of the motherland.

2 RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

2.1.1 DEFINITION OF STRESS

The term "Stress" was proposed last century by Hans Selye, a scholar specializing in physiology and psychology. Later, Selye introduced the term "Stress" into the social sciences, using it as a unit of gravity in physics. In the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary, pressure has three explanations: (1) the force perpendicular to the surface of an object; (2) the force that forces or subdues a person; (3) the burden that causes tension and unease. This study mainly uses a third explanation to explain stress, where the subject cannot bear certain adverse reactions caused by an object or factor

2.1.2 PROFESSIONAL PRESSURE FOR KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

The earliest research on teacher work stress dates back to the 1970s, when Kyriacou and Sutcliffe proposed the definition of teacher occupational stress, stating that negative emotions



generated by teachers during work are considered teacher occupational stress. Related studies show that teachers are a high-pressure group. Against the backdrop of slow early development in early childhood education, research on occupational stress for early childhood teachers is scarcely scarce, so research on teacher stress requires more support from teacher occupational stress. This study defines occupational stress for preschool teachers as a series of negative emotional experiences experienced by teachers in their living environment and during work.

2.1.3 NEWLY HIRED KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

This study defines newly hired preschool teachers as: preschool education professionals who have completed all theoretical studies and social practice of preschool education courses at school, and who have just started working as early childhood teachers.

2.2 RESEARCH METHODS

This study lays the foundation for research on occupational stress among preschool teachers by reviewing a large amount of literature and related journals, collecting and integrating interview content, and designing a questionnaire survey to investigate the current status of occupational stress among newly hired preschool teachers.

2.2.1 RESEARCH SUBJECT

This study targeted newly hired preschool teachers and distributed 100 questionnaires. The basic information of the survey subjects was as follows: 83 majored in preschool education, while 0 majored in other majors. Regarding teacher education; There were 78 and 4 with bachelor's and associate degrees, with 0 at high school level or below and with graduate degrees, 83 with a teaching age of 0~12 months, and 28, 33, and 22 with primary, medium, and senior classes, respectively.

2.2.2 RESEARCH TOOLS

Based on the interview content, this study developed a questionnaire titled "Current Occupational Stress of Newly Hired Preschool Teachers," conducted in written language based on the information provided. First is the overall evaluation of newly hired preschool teachers; including aspects such as age, teaching experience, education, salary and benefits, and classes taught; second is a survey on the work situation of newly hired preschool teachers; including multiple-choice and open-ended questions on five influencing factors: children's salary and benefits, colleague relationships, kindergarten management, parents, society, and the teacher themselves.

3 SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT OCCUPATIONAL STRESS OF NEWLY HIRED KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

According to the collected questionnaire data, the overall assessment of newly hired preschool teachers shows (Table 2);

Most newly hired preschool teachers feel that their work is stressful and that their occupational stress is relatively high.

TABLE 1 STATISTICS ON OCCUPATIONAL STRESS OF NEWLY HIRED PRESCHOOL TEACHERS (N=83)

	Number of people	Percentage (%)
None	0	0
Smaller	13	15.66
Larger	50	60.24
It's huge	20	24.1

Based on the questionnaire analysis, the main research findings are as follows:

3.1 PRESSURE FROM TEACHERS' WORKLOAD

Numerous studies show that one of the main reasons new kindergarten teachers feel stressed is the workload of kindergarten teachers. It is well known within the industry that most kindergarten teachers exceed the workload limit. Preschool teachers generally report that kindergarten work hours are long and the workload is too heavy. Most people believe that as long as you manage the children well and eat and drink in kindergarten, there's nothing else to do. In fact, besides taking on educational and teaching duties, the special nature of the profession means that teachers must personally make related playful teaching aids for classroom learning. In addition, higher-level leaders assign some specific tasks. Teaching work is crowded with secondary activities such as inspections, evaluations, and observations, causing teachers to feel "immense pressure." As newly hired preschool teachers, they lack much experience. The daily work already requires a lot of energy, and other tasks can only be completed during breaks. A series of tasks only exhausts the teachers physically and mentally. This increases their sense of professional pressure.

TABLE 2 CLASS SIZE EXCEEDING STANDARDS (N=83)

	Number of people	Percentage (%)
Not exceeding the standard	37	44.58
Exceeding the standard by up to 5 items	21	25.3



Exceeding the standard by more than 5 items	25	30.12
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As shown in Figure 1, exceeding the class size limit in kindergartens is quite serious. Exceeding class size limits puts the greatest pressure on teachers—the safety of children. In the interview, Teacher A said, "Too large a class size and too many children, and the safety of the children" has become their biggest concern. Most kindergartens have two teachers and one caregiver, and with this one teacher and one caregiver, they are already exhausted from managing their classes. For them, having an excess class size means they not only spend more time managing the class, but also have many children and cannot guarantee teaching quality, which affects the effectiveness of education and teaching.

3.2 PRESSURE FROM PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

Newly hired preschool teachers said they often find communication with parents very challenging. Due to differences among parents, they need to spend a lot of time communicating with parents about their children's education issues, seeking their support and cooperation.

TABLE 3 STATISTICS ON STRESS FROM PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN (N=83)

	Number of people	Percentage (%)
Understand and support teachers' work	70	84.34
Lack of understanding and support for teachers' work	9	10.84
Unreasonable disturbances and obstructing teachers' work	4	4.82

From Table 3, it can be seen; Most parents still support teachers' work, while only a small number do not strongly support it. Analysis of the reasons: On one hand; Nowadays, only-child families are prevalent, emphasizing children's development and fearing that children will fall behind at the "starting line." When sending children to kindergarten, teachers should be responsible for their children and impart more knowledge. On the other hand; Parents of kindergartens do not treat kindergarten teachers as teachers, believing that teachers in primary, middle, and university schools are the real teachers. As for teachers, they are merely senior caregivers who watch over children. Sending

children to kindergarten is enough to feed and play well. In an interview: Teacher B mentioned; A child in the class had their face scratched. This child was fine from morning until noon, but maybe his face was accidentally scratched while playing outdoors in the afternoon. In this special situation after leaving kindergarten, the teacher could only quickly ask about the child's situation. After all the children had left, the teacher called the child's parents to ask about the child's situation, but the child couldn't give a clear answer. In the end, the parent blamed the teacher for the mistake, resulting in an unhappy outcome. There are many similar incidents in kindergarten. One teacher C shared her own experience: "It's not about educating children, but about educating parents." For example, when asked to work with parents about their parents' misunderstanding after returning home, this not only adds to the teacher's teaching burden but also spends a lot of time urging them to complete tasks. By the end of the day, they are already physically and mentally exhausted and on the verge of collapse, preferring to work part-time rather than be a kindergarten teacher. Parents often blame teachers for their lack of recognition, saying their children only know how to play and haven't learned anything at all. Parents' lack of approval puts psychological pressure on teachers and leads to professional burnout.

3.3 THE PRESSURE OF LOW SOCIAL STATUS FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

As everyone knows, preschool teachers have low social status and low salaries. In the eyes of the public, preschool teachers are merely nannies who watch over children. The reasons are: on one hand; Preschool education started late. Although the government has issued many documents in recent years and invested some financial support for its development, many people in preschool education have low recognition and misunderstandings, failing to truly pay attention to their work. They see them as nannies and do not understand the professionalism of the profession, believing that as long as they manage children and children's eating, drinking, and resting well, there is nothing else to do. On the other hand; Although the "Teachers Law" clearly states that teachers are professionals, very few people treat them as professionals within the entire teacher category, let alone respect teachers and emphasize education. This causes a certain degree of psychological gap among kindergarten teachers and reduces their professional happiness.

3.4 KINDERGARTEN MANAGEMENT PRESSURE

Kindergartens are where teachers work. It is clearly stated; Kindergartens should strictly follow the standards of the "Kindergarten Work Regulations," arrange the number and number of classes appropriately, and ensure that the teaching workload is within the teacher's individual ability. In fact, due to the limited number of kindergartens, most kindergartens exceed the quota for class sizes. During work, teaching work is crowded by secondary activities such as inspections, evaluations, and observations, causing teachers to feel "immense pressure." Exceeding class sizes and completing a series of additional tasks places great physical and psychological burden on kindergarten teachers. Division of labor in kindergarten management is



unclear, and teachers' enthusiasm for work is low, affecting their enthusiasm. Most kindergartens follow the "Kindergarten Staff Allocation Standards" when allocating class teacher numbers, with two teachers per class and one caregiver jointly managing class work. A few kindergartens still operate with one teacher and one caregiver, with only one teacher and one caregiver per class. This arrangement invisibly puts a certain degree of pressure on kindergarten teachers. In an interview, Teacher D mentioned that the "two teachers and one care" system was quite difficult for the class, and they were constantly under high mental tension, which affected their work efficiency.

The interview revealed that most newly hired kindergarten teachers said their kindergarten principals are relatively democratic. They are considerate of their work, focusing their time on early childhood education and teaching, alternating between morning and evening shifts, without frequent overtime. They are relatively satisfied with their work and highly motivated; these teachers feel that the pressure from work is not very high. A small number of newly hired kindergarten teachers said their kindergarten principals are authoritarian and cannot be considerate of themselves in their work. In the interview, one teacher E said: their principal often assigns them tasks unrelated to work, and such untimely work arrangements from leaders leave them physically and mentally exhausted and under great pressure.

Kindergarten colleague relationships are a group that coexists with cooperation and competition. A good collective atmosphere requires good leadership, with clear rewards and penalties and well-defined division of labor management mechanisms. Harmonious colleague relationships help create a good working environment and, to some extent, help reduce work pressure. The interview revealed that the kindergarten's management in this area needs improvement. Unfair rewards and penalties and unclear division of labor reduce their enthusiasm and hinder the development of early childhood education.

3.5 PRESSURE FROM THE TEACHER TRAINING SYSTEM

With the development of preschool education, the requirements for the professionalism of kindergarten teachers are becoming increasingly high.

TABLE 4 STATISTICS ON STRESS FROM TEACHERS' TRAINING SYSTEMS (N=83)

	Number of people	Percentage (%)
No sensation	0	0
Yes, not many times	38	45.78
Feel it often	41	49.4

Always feeling	4	4.82
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From Table 4, it can be seen that most kindergarten teachers feel their knowledge is insufficient. Analyzing the reasons, on one hand; Kindergarten teachers have limited training slots, and not all kindergarten teachers have the opportunity to undergo further training and improve their abilities. Generally speaking, such opportunities prioritize outstanding senior teachers. Interviews have shown that only outstanding senior teachers in kindergartens have the opportunity to participate in further education and training. Opportunities for further study like this are already very limited, so these opportunities are naturally reserved for experienced teachers with many years of teaching experience, which reduces the enthusiasm of young children. On the other hand, preschool teachers face heavy workloads and neglect their own learning, resulting in insufficient educational ability and professional pressure.

3.6 PRESSURE FROM TEACHER PERSONNEL AND ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS

With the country's increasing emphasis on preschool education, the continuous expansion of the preschool teacher workforce, and the implementation of the teacher appointment system, the professional pressure on preschool teachers has increased significantly. Competition among teachers and survival pressures further intensify the professional pressure on preschool teachers. Analysis of the reasons; On one hand, the implementation of the teacher appointment system leads to competition among kindergarten teachers and high professional pressure, requiring continuous improvement in learning advanced educational and teaching knowledge to improve professional skills. On the other hand, the kindergarten has frequent assessments. In addition to completing their own work, newly hired teachers must also complete a series of assessment tasks, resulting in little extra study time.

3.7 PRESSURE FROM THE TEACHER'S OWN FACTORS

Whether preschool teachers feel pressure, the degree of stress, and other objective factors are only influenced to a certain extent. In reality, jobs without stress are almost nonexistent. Having work pressure is not necessarily a bad thing; appropriate work pressure can motivate people, stimulate enthusiasm, and have a positive effect. But if the pressure is too great, it can have negative effects, such as difficulty concentrating, worry, irritability, anxiety, and in severe cases, violent tendencies. The generation of stress may also reflect a lack of personal ability or imperfection, and high expectations can lead to psychological disparity. When facing pressure, mindset is very important. If you do not actively adjust stress and bottle it up inside, it will only increase your own pressure and hinder physical and mental health.

4 STRATEGIES TO MITIGATE THE COPING STRATEGIES OF NEWLY HIRED KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS



Based on the above data analysis, the factors influencing occupational stress for newly hired preschool teachers are multifaceted. Based on the sources of occupational stress, this study proposes the following six recommendations to alleviate their professional stress and promote their physical and mental health and professional development.

4.1 STARTING FROM THE TEACHER'S OWN PERSPECTIVE, ACTIVELY ADJUST PERSONAL PRESSURE

In reality, jobs without stress are almost nonexistent. Having work pressure is not necessarily a bad thing; appropriate work pressure can motivate people, stimulate enthusiasm, and have a positive effect. But if the pressure is too great, it can have negative effects, such as difficulty concentrating, worry, irritability, anxiety, and in severe cases, violent tendencies. The generation of stress may also reflect a lack of personal ability or imperfection, and the psychological gap caused by high expectations. Having pressure is not scary; what's scary is inaction in the face of pressure. When facing pressure, mindset is very important. First, we should maintain a positive and optimistic attitude and face stress with ease. A good mood will lead to better solutions, while a bad mood is meaningless in handling problems. Second, we can relieve stress through various means, such as listening to music, resting, exercising, and talking to family and friends to relieve stress. Finally, cultivate hobbies and hobbies, divert attention, empty your mind, and face and resolve stress in your best state. Instead of bottling up stress and not releasing it, it only increases your own stress and is detrimental to your physical and mental health.

4.2 REDUCE UNNECESSARY WORK FOR KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS AND RETURN EDUCATION TO THE MAIN TOPIC

The heavy workload is overwhelming for kindergarten teachers. The kindergarten size should be conducive to children's physical and mental health and ease of management. Kindergartens should strictly follow the standards of the "Kindergarten Work Regulations," arrange appropriate number and number of classes, and ensure that teaching workload is within the teacher's individual capabilities.

In real life, teaching work is crowded by secondary activities such as inspections, evaluations, and observations, putting teachers under "immense pressure." How to adjust teachers' physical and psychological burdens and help them get through the adaptation period faster is especially important. Kindergarten leaders and supervisory departments at all levels should seriously listen to teachers' voices and demands, and treat reducing teachers' burdens as an important task. To allow teachers' energy to return to the classroom itself, respect their core duties. Teachers are a key factor in educational development. Teachers' work should focus on teaching and education, not on handing over various forms or handling evaluations. Led by education administrative departments, teachers should return to the classroom, avoid taking on too much work outside of teaching, and truly return to their core duties and roles on the "educational theme." Teachers should be

fully engaged in early childhood education and reduce the burden of miscellaneous tasks. Whether teachers can effectively reduce their burden is closely related to the healthy growth of children and requires the joint promotion of the whole society. Higher authorities in kindergartens should minimize some formal work requirements to bring education back to its main theme.

4.3 IMPROVE SOCIAL BENEFITS AND ELEVATE THE STATUS OF DIVISIONS

At present, preschool education in China is non-compulsory. Except for a few public kindergartens, teachers' salaries in other kindergartens are paid by the kindergarten. Due to the lack of corresponding subsidies, teachers' salaries often cannot meet their living needs. Coupled with their low social status and heavy workload, their motivation to work is lowered and professional burnout is common. Therefore, the state should provide more economic policy support for early childhood education, with local governments providing certain financial subsidies to improve teachers' economic security and secure more welfare for them. By solving teachers' economic problems, they can ensure they have no worries in their work, encouraging them to approach early childhood education with a more proactive attitude. In addition, governments at all levels and education authorities should use various media to promote knowledge about the profession of early childhood teachers, so that more people can understand the real situation of the profession, provide greater understanding and support, and jointly promote the development of early childhood education.

4.4 CARRY OUT DIVERSE HOME-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND ESTABLISH CORRECT CONCEPTS OF HOME-SCHOOL COOPERATION

Parents often put tremendous pressure on teachers, so it is necessary for parents to understand their work and thus show greater respect for their activities. Kindergartens organize effective parent-child activities and open activities

By convening parent committees, parents can better understand the specific work of preschool teachers, and some related tasks in the class can be delegated to the parent committee to handle. This not only reduces teachers' workload to some extent, but also motivates parents, supports and understands their work, thereby promoting home-school cooperation. In addition, doing a good job in parents' ideological education is equally important for reducing teachers' pressure. First, kindergartens should regularly conduct parent education to improve the quality of parents themselves, so that parents can better cooperate with teachers in early childhood education work. Second, governments at all levels and education authorities should use various media to promote knowledge related to the profession of early childhood teachers, so that more people can understand the real situation of the profession, provide more understanding and support, and actively allocate teacher work.

4.5 IMPROVE KINDERGARTEN MANAGEMENT



METHODS AND BOOST WORK ENTHUSIASM

Strengthening kindergarten management is equally important for alleviating psychological pressure on teachers. First, the evaluation standards for personnel and assessment systems should adopt a more humane approach, focusing on individual differences among kindergarten teachers and providing a more harmonious and relaxed working environment. Kindergarten colleague relationships are a group that coexists with cooperation and competition. A good collective atmosphere requires a good leader, with clear rewards and penalties and well-defined division of labor management mechanisms. Harmonious colleague relationships help create a good working environment and, to some extent, help reduce work pressure. This prevents unfair competition and unreasonable treatment from affecting relationships among colleagues. Second, advancement and further education in kindergartens should be fair and just, ensuring that every teacher has the opportunity to participate, boosting teachers' confidence, and eliminating their work concerns so they can fully engage in early childhood education. Finally, kindergarten rewards and punishments must be fair and have clear division of labor. The kindergarten's reward and punishment system should be considered from multiple angles. If the reward system is unreasonable, on one hand, it affects unfair competition among colleagues, causing tension and harming the physical and mental health of kindergarten teachers. On the other hand, if all rewards are only for outstanding senior teachers, new teachers may feel undervalued and reduce their motivation for work. Therefore, kindergarten rewards and division of labor must be fair and reasonable. This not only increases teachers' enthusiasm but also helps colleagues get along amicably and create a relaxed and harmonious working environment.

4.6 STRENGTHEN THE STUDY OF PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND IMPROVE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

To adapt to the times, preschool teachers should not be content with the status quo. They should strengthen their own learning, establish good study habits, and use the lifelong learning philosophy to encourage themselves to continuously enrich their professional competence. In addition, they should update educational concepts in line with the needs of the times, absorb advanced teaching philosophies and methods, and thus become excellent preschool teachers. Only in this way can they ensure their strengths are objectively evaluated and filled gaps in personal abilities while leveraging their own teaching strengths.

5 CONCLUSION

Children are the vital force for China's future development. Therefore, providing children with a better learning environment and higher-quality teaching content plays a significant role in national development. Therefore, improving teachers' teaching abilities is a key task for future education discussions. While strengthening early childhood education standards, we should also provide more humanistic care to

ensure that early childhood education approaches work with a positive attitude and brings children better values and attitudes toward handling matters. This article explores the current state of occupational stress in early childhood education, analyzes its sources, and proposes rational suggestions to alleviate the professional stress of early childhood teachers.

- (1) Start from oneself and take corresponding measures to self-regulate stress;
- (2) Reduce workload and lessen the burden of kindergarten teachers;
- (3) Improve social benefits and strengthen the social status of preschool teachers;
- (4) Carry out diverse home-school activities and establish correct concepts of home-school cooperation;
- (5) Improve kindergarten management methods and enhance teachers' enthusiasm;
- (6) Strengthen self-learning and improve professional competence.

All social strata should view the profession of kindergarten teachers correctly and offer them more understanding and support.

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