

An Exploration of the Relationship between Psychological Capital and the Emotional Labor of Taiwanese Preschool Teachers

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Abstract. Preschool teachers interact with both children and adults every day; thus, they have to keep their emotions under control all the time. This constitutes "emotional labor." Psychological capital is a combination of the concepts "positive psychology" and "capital". This study was aimed at an exploration of whether preschool teachers' emotional labor is influenced by their psychological capital, and whether their psychological capital is gradually lost as a result of having to continuously expend emotional labor. 390 samples were adapted to explore the relationship between psychological capital and emotional labor in Taiwanese preschool teachers. This study also discussed the human resource management issues related to preschool teachers based on the research results and proposed some suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Psychological Capital, Emotional Labor, Preschool Teachers.

1. INTRODUCATION

An emotion is an individual's feeling caused by some form of stimulation (Barrett, Mesquita, Ochsner & Gross, 2007). It has been proven that positive emotions can help improve learning effects in students and teachers' enthusiasm about teaching and can also improve the mastery atmosphere inside of classrooms (Fu,2011; Gonul Sakiz,2007; Pekrun, Goetz, & Titz, 2002). Preschool teachers interact with children and adults every day, and they have to keep their emotions under control all the time. Thus, they are emotional laborers (Brotherdge & Grandey, 2002; Kamerman, 2000).

In recent years, because of the impact of the low birth rate in Taiwan, for first-line professionals providing early childhood educational services. sustainable survival, development, and management of early childhood education businesses have become a lot more difficult than was the case prior to this time (Li and Chen, 2006). But, the percentage of preschool children attending preschool has been increasing year by year. Preschool teachers play an important role in regard to their students' childhood as they are growing up. However, there have been very few researchers studying the emotional labor expended by preschool teachers, and very limited support has been provided from either the society or the government. Understanding the work-related problems for preschool teachers that are associated with emotional labor has become an important issue.

However, some scholars (Isenbarger, & Zembylas, 2006; Op't Eynde & Turner, 2006) have indicated that teachers have certain influences on society as a whole. They evaluate student responses. Sometimes they voluntarily exhibit emotions for the purpose of teaching practices. If teachers care about the learning conditions in the classroom, they are willing to dedicate themselves emotionally for the good of their students. Preschool teachers are willing to expend their energy when facing the reality of emotional labor. Thus, they do not consider emotional labor as "labor". Therefore, is the emotional transformation of negative events related to the psychological capital of preschool teachers?

The idea of psychological capital originated from positive psychology, which stresses that individuals develop positive abilities instead of negative memories from their past experiences (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Seligman, 2012). Positive psychology is a science based on subjective experiences, positive personal traits, and positive organization, with the goal of improving quality of life and preventing abnormality (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The purpose of positive psychology is to investigate and uncover a vision of a better quality of life for people. The core concept of "psychological capital" is based on this concept (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). Psychological capital is a combination of the concepts of "positive psychology" and "capital". Traditional economical capital focuses on "what you have"; human capital focuses on "what you know"; social capital focus on "who you know" in interpersonal relationships, and psychological capital focuses on "who you are" (Luthans et al., 2004), in other words, what your own personal characteristics are. Thus, this study was aimed at an exploration of whether it is possible to separate preschool teachers' negative emotional labor from the aspect of their psychological capital by understanding their psychological capital.

The focuses of previous studies investigating the psychological capital of teachers in Taiwan have mainly been on high school and elementary school teachers. The only study about preschool teachers is a study by Li (2009) regarding the potential relationship between 389 preschool teachers' psychological capital and their work performance. The results of that study indicated that the relationship was positive and significant. However, preschool teachers do not have only positively-oriented psychology related to their psychological capital. In fact, their emotional labor also includes facing pressure from parents and colleagues, as well as those associated with preschool administrative affairs, and even enrollment and other activities. This study is an attempt to explore whether preschool teachers' emotional labor is influenced by their psychological capital and also is intended to determine whether their psychological capital gradually drains away as they continuously expend emotional effort. This study also, based on the findings, discusses the manpower resource management issues related to preschool teachers and proposes some suggestions for future research. In sum, the purpose of this study was to explore the influence of preschool teachers' emotional labor on their psychological capital and to learn more about the feedback effect of preschool teachers' psychological capital on their emotional labor.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Meaning of Psychological Capital

From the aspect of economics, "capital" is important asset for individuals and organizations by which they create wealth. Luthans et al. (2004) believed that, in the hypercompetitive environment of the 21st century, the long-term competitive advantages of economic capital, human capital, and social capital can no longer be achieved as they were in the past. Psychological capital stresses individual psychological quality and emphasizes "who you are". Its developmental orientation is "what you can become" (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). Psychological capital cannot be obtained from the outside. It is different from human capital and social capital, which are influenced by high purchase costs or labor migration (Li, 2009). In regard to organizations, psychological capital can help enterprises to create more competitive advantages. In regard to individuals, psychological capital is an important factor that facilitates individual development and growth as well as improvements in performance (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, & Norman, 2007).

"Psychological capital" is a combination of the concepts of "positive psychology" and "capital" and contains four constructs: self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience (Luthans et al., 2004; Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). Luthans (2002) considered the concept of self-efficacy in the social learning theory proposed by Bandura (1977) as a positive organizational behavior. Self-efficacy is defined as the faith of an individual being able to, in a certain situation, boost his own motivation, deploy cognitive resources, and take required actions, in order to complete a certain task. In other words, it is a type of self-confidence related to being able to complete a certain task (Bandura, 1977). Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio (2007) believed that this kind of confidence is a type of self-efficacy, which can facilitate an individual with regard to putting in the necessary effort to complete a challenging task successfully. Optimism is a psychological state of believing that "good things are going to happen soon" (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Seligman (2002) suggested that optimism is a style of interpretation and a form of attribution. The differences between an optimist and a pessimist are their permanent, general, and individual interpretations of their surroundings. Hope is a positive state of motivation, a sense of succeeding resulting from goal-oriented efficiency and paths planned to achieve goals (Snyder et al., 2003). In other words, it is a positive psychological state in which goals are pursued through agency thinking and pathways. Resilience is individual adaptive behavior that occurs when facing a major threat and the ability to recover from frustrations rapidly (Masten, 2001). Wagnild and Young (1993) indicated that this kind of ability related to getting back on the feet after failures and frustrations is a personal

trait of adapting to negative pressure.

According to current studies involving the psychological capital of teachers in Taiwan, it has been proven that psychological capital is positively related to organizational commitment, work attitude, job performance, job satisfaction, teaching effectiveness, and quality of life (Huang, 2012; Li, 2009; Lin, 2012; Yo, 2012). This means that psychological capital is a positive and active force that increases teachers' work effectiveness and the competitive advantages of organizations.

2.2 The Meaning of Emotional Labor

The concept of emotional labor was first proposed by Hochschild (1983). He conducted an in-depth case study of the emotional expressions of the Delta Air Lines cabin crew. He believed that the cabin crew's emotional expressions must follow rules set forth by their employer so that they can fake their emotions in order to make their customers happy. The issue of "emotional labor" has gradually become a concern and has been broadly discussed in educational circles and other industries (Roulston, 2004). "Emotional labor" is the use of employees' emotional expressions as a tool to make profits for organizations (James, 1992). Emotional expressions are "commercialized" and sold for the purpose of getting paid. Thus, they have trade value (Hochschild, 1983).

Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) believed that emotional labor is action taken to express emotions properly in order to follow the rules of emotional display required by an organization. According to this viewpoint, emotional labor is a behavior that can be directly observed. Emotional labor requires effort and is always generated in human interactions. It includes behavior conducted based on emotional labor, meeting organizational requirements, and managing internal feelings, or it may only be expressed through control of consciousness. Wharton

(1993) summarized Hochschild's viewpoints on emotional labor and indicated that high emotional labor must satisfy three specific conditions: (1) the emotional labor consists of face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact with the general public; (2) the employees are required to display a certain emotional state in front of customers that is beneficial to the organization; and (3) the employer is allowed to control the employees' emotional activities to a certain degree through training or supervisory mechanisms. Thus, emotional labor may consist of positive and happy emotions expressed at work intended to create a pleasant work atmosphere, negative and serious emotions intended to create a work atmosphere that build the respect of customers, or a neutral and fair emotion without feelings intended to build a professional image (Hochschild, 1983; Wharton, 1993; Morris & Feldman, 1996). In other words, "emotional labor" is a form of work performance involving controlling one's own emotions while interacting with people at work to meet the expectations of the organization as well as using language and physical movements intended to make customers feel supported, safe, and happy (Hochschild, 1983).

Morris and Feldman (1996) suggested that emotional labor includes effort that one must put in and the control one must have regarding expressing emotions during interpersonal interactions. There are four constructs of emotional labor, "frequency of proper emotional expression", "degree of paying attention to required rules", "variety of emotions that must be expressed at work", and "emotional disorders". Grandey (2000) partially modified the constructs proposed by other scholars and classified the constructs based on the degree of disguise. Grandey suggested that there are two constructs of emotional labor, "surface disguise" and "deep-level disguise". Schaubroeck and Jones (2000) took the viewpoint of expression and repression of emotions, indicating the idea that the two constructs of emotional labor are "expressing positive emotions" and "repressing negative emotions". Li and Chen (2006) referenced Hochschild's argument (1983) and used the model to develop an emotional labor load scale for organizations built by Lin (2000) in order to propose their opinions and make some modifications leading to the development of the "emotional labor scale for preschool teachers". In this scale, there are four constructs of emotional labor, "variety of emotions", "requirements for emotional expression", "surface emotional actions", and "deep-level emotional actions".

Studies with research subjects from educational circles have indicated that teachers are indeed expending emotional labor (Brotherdge & Grandey, 2002; Roulston, 2004). Preschool teachers are first-line staff interacting with both students and their parents in preschools. They are professional technicians and care takers of children and are classified as a high emotional labor group according to Hochschild's classifications.

2.3 Summary

According to Hochschild's argument (1983), preschool teachers have to interact with both children and their parents every day, so they must stay in control of their emotions in order to achieve the goals of their jobs. Thus, they are expending high amounts of emotional labor (Brotherdge & Grandey, 2002; Kamerman, 2000). A teaching job may lead to invisible exhaustion (Jiang, 2002). Besides teaching children, preschool teachers also have to pay a very high emotional price when interacting with children's parents. Sometimes, they need support from the positive energy coming from their own personal traits in order to devote themselves to their work. This kind of positive energy is the positive thinking related to achievement of goals, optimism, self-motivation, and the ability to make adjustments after frustration, which all have a positive influence on one's job involvement (Mav, Gilson, & Harter, 2004). Thus, this study proposed the following hypothesis:

[H1] Preschool teachers' psychological capital can be used to predict their levels of emotional labor.

In addition, individuals' resilience from events and flexibility both have been shown to have a positive influence on job involvement (Britt, Bartone, & Adler, 2001). Emotional loads on teachers may change according to their individual adjustment (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Thus, this study proposed the second hypothesis:

[H2] Preschool teachers' emotional labor has a feedback effect on their psychological capital.

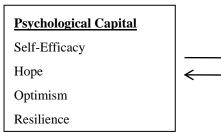
3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Structure

Based on the literature review and research purpose, the research structure of this study is proposed as shown in Figure 1:

 H_1

 H_2



Emotional Labor
Variety of Emotions
Requirements for Emotional Expression
Surface Emotional Action
Deep-Level Emotional Action

Figure 1. Research Structure

3.2 Research Tools

In this study, the "psychological capital scale for preschool teachers" and the "emotional labor scale for preschool teachers" were used for the empirical tests. The "psychological capital scale for preschool teachers" was designed by Li (2009), who referenced the psychological capital questionnaire by Luthans et al. (2007), the hope scale by Snyder et al. (2003), the life orientation test by Scheier and Carver (1985), and the self-healing scale by Block and Kremen (1996). This scale contains 20 items and 4 subscales, which include the "self-efficacy subscale" (α =.886), the "hope subscale" (α =.971), the "optimism subscale" (α =.954), and the "resilience subscale" (α =.967).

The "emotional labor scale for preschool teachers" used in this study was designed by Li and Chen (2006) and was based on Hochschild's arguments (1983). They referenced Lin's model to develop emotional labor load scale for organizations (2000) and modified the scale according to expert opinions on preschool teachers' emotional labor in the field of education in order to develop the "emotional labor scale for preschool teachers". This scale contains 20 items, with 4 constructs of emotional labor, which include "variety of emotions" (α =.896), "requirements for emotional expression" (α =.836), "surface emotional actions" (α =.797), and "deep-level emotional actions" (α =.882). In order to avoid participants taking a neutral position (no comment), a Likert 6-point scale was adopted in this study.

3.3 Participants

The sampling population of this study included all preschool teachers in Taiwan (450,004 teachers) (Department of Statistics, Ministry of Education, 2014). Based on the percentage of the population, the required sample size was calculated. Under the conditions of n= Z2*p(1-p)/e2, $\alpha=0.05$, p=0.5, and $\epsilon=0.05$, the sample size has to be at least 384.16. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) believed the sample size should be 384 based on numerical analysis. Considering the two viewpoints above, the requirement of sample size being at least 5% of the population size, with an estimated error within $\pm 0.50\%$ (confidence level: 95%)

based on the population size, for the purposes of this study, 500 preschool teachers were selected for the survey. After the invalid questionnaires were excluded, the valid sample size was 390, and the response rate was 78%.

3.4 Data Processing

After the questionnaire survey was conducted, and the empirical data were collected, the researcher performed data analyses using the statistical methods listed below.

3.4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Means and standard deviations were used to describe preschool teachers' total scores of "psychological capital" and "emotional labor" and factor scores for the purpose of exploring preschool teachers' degrees of cognition in regard to the constructs "psychological capital" and "emotional labor". The standard deviations calculated represent the degrees of dispersion of preschool teachers' views on the items in the questionnaire. If the standard deviation of an item is small, this means the preschool teachers' used in this study had views on this item that were rather consistent. The average scores of the items represent preschool teachers' degree of agreement with the items in the questionnaire. If the average score of an item is high, this means the preschool teachers under consideration attached a lot of importance to this item.

3.4.2 Regression Analysis

A regression analysis was performed for this study with the independent variable being preschool teachers' psychological capital and the dependent variable being preschool teachers' emotional labor. Then, the preschool teachers' emotional labor was used to predict its feedback effect on psychological capital.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Preschool Teachers' Current Psychological Capital and Emotional Labor Situation

According to the descriptive statistics for the empirical data from the 390 preschool teachers used as the sample in this study (Table 1), the average of the preschool teachers' psychological capital scores was 4.76, and the standard deviation was .035. From the viewpoint of a 6-point scale, the preschool teachers had very high psychological capital, and their views were similar. The average of the emotional labor scores was 4.87, and the standard deviation was .034. The preschool teachers' emotional labor was also high, and the participants' views tended to be the same. When the skewness and kurtosis of a distribution are close to 0, this distribution is close to a normal distribution (Chiu, 2000). According to Table 1, the distributions for the current psychological capital and the emotional labor scores of these preschool teachers were close to a normal distribution.

In the case of the descriptive statistics of the participants' scores for the 4 factors including psychological capital, self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, the average score for "hope" was the highest (M=4.84 and SD=.66), followed by "self-efficacy" (M=4.83 and SD=.69) and "optimism" (M=4.76 and SD=.76), and the average score for "resilience" was the lowest (M=4.61 and SD=.79). The preschool teachers' scores for the 4 factors of psychological capital were all close to 5, and these factor scores were about the same. This means that the psychological capital of these preschool teachers was quite good. Among the factors, the skewness (-.710) and kurtosis (1.333) of "optimism" were rather high, and the preschool teachers' scores for this factor were rather negative and concentrated in distribution. For the factor "optimism", the preschool teachers' psychological capital was rather insufficient.

In regard to the descriptive statistics of the participants' scores for the 4

factors including emotional labor, variety of emotions, requirements for emotional expression, surface emotional actions, and deep-level emotional actions, the average score of "requirements for emotional expression" was the highest (M=5.20 and SD=.67), followed by "variety of emotions" (M=4.99 and SD=.74) and "deep-level emotional actions" (M=4.88 and SD=.71), and the average score of "surface emotional actions" was the lowest (M=4.42 and SD=.78). The preschool teachers' scores for all 4 emotional labor factors were all high. This means that their emotional labor load is high. Most notably, the "requirements for emotional expression" was the heaviest emotional load for the preschool teachers. The kurtosis (.080) of "deep-level emotional actions" was -.190, which means the distribution was symmetric.

 Table 1. The descriptive statistics for the preschool teachers' psychological capital

 and emotional labor (N=390)

		Standard	Skewness	Kurtosis
	Mean	Deviation		
Psychological Capital	4.7634	.03472	489	.566
Self-efficacy	4.8338	.69428	542	.432
Норе	4.8406	.66295	208	.047
Optimism	4.7578	.75727	710	1.133
Resilience	4.6106	.79235	457	.227
Emotional Labor	4.8720	.03388	657	.401
Variety of motions	4.9894	.73571	681	.574
Requirements for emotional	5.1968	.67345	751	.390
expression	0.1968	.67345	701	.390
Surface emotional actions	4.4190	.77736	196	242
Deep-level emotional actions	4.8828	.71358	437	.080

4.2 The Prediction Effect of Preschool Teachers' Psychological Capital on Their

Emotional Labor

A regression analysis was performed with the 4 constructs of psychological capital as the independent variable and emotional labor as the dependent variable. As shown in Table 2, for the joint prediction of emotional labor based on the 4 constructs of psychological capital, the significance level was achieved with F(4,386)=125.444 and p<.05. 56.8% of the variations in the joint prediction of emotional labor could be explained by the 4 constructs of psychological capital (adj. $R^2=.568$). All the constructs were significant with the exception of "self-efficacy" (B=..117 and p>.05). All 4 psychological capital variables, except "self-efficacy", could significantly predict emotional labor. In other words, if the preschool teachers' scores in "hope", "optimism", and "resilience" were high, their scores in emotional labor would be high, as well. That is to say, when the preschool teachers could stick to their own goals, keep positive attribution toward success, and persevere in the face of difficulties and frustrations, the amount of emotional labor they engaged in would be high.

Table 2. The summary of the regression analysis predicting emotional labor using

		Dependent Variable
Independent Variable		Emotional labor
Psychological of	capital	
	Self-efficacy	117
	Hope	4.799*
	Optimism	4.706*
	Resilience	4.129*
F(4,386)		125.444
Adj. R ²		.568

the four constructs of psychological capital jointly (N=390)

Note: The regression coefficients shown in the table are standardized coefficients.

4.3 The Feedback Effect of Preschool Teachers' Emotional Labor on Their Psychological Capital

A regression analysis was performed with the 4 constructs of emotional labor as the independent variable and psychological capital as the dependent variable. As shown in Table 3, for the joint prediction of psychological capital based on the 4 constructs of emotional labor, the significance level was achieved with F(4,386)=140.397, and p<.05. 61.3% of the variations in the joint prediction of psychological capital could be explained by the 4 psychological capital constructs (adj. R²=.613). All the constructs were significant with the exception of "surface emotional action" (β =.015 and p>.05). All 4 emotional labor variables, except "surface emotional action", could significantly predict psychological capital. In other words, if the preschool teachers' scores in "variety of emotions", "requirements for emotional expression", and "deep-level emotional actions" were high, their scores in psychological capital would be high, as well.

Table 3. The summary of the regression analysis predicting psychological capital

		Dependent Variable
Independent	t Variable	Psychological capital
Emotional		
labor		
	Variety of emotions	.389*
	Requirements for emotional expression	.134*
	Surface emotional actions	015
	Deep-level emotional actions	.363*
F(4,386)		150.397
Adj. R ²		.613

using the four constructs of emotional labor jointly (N=390)

Note: The regression coefficients shown in the table are standardized coefficients.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Increasing Preschool Teachers' Self-Efficacy in Order to Reduce Their Emotional Labor

Psychological capital is a type of internal psychological resource for individuals beyond human capital and social capital. Systematic investment and development may transform this active psychological state into a favorable condition to facilitate competitive advantages (Luthans, Avolio, Walumbwa, & Li, 2005). People are the conversion subjects of organizational values. Psychological capital does not come from the outside, but rather is an individual psychological state. This study used the four constructs of psychological capital, which include self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience, to predict preschool teachers' emotional labor. The results indicate that only self-efficacy could not be used to predict emotional labor. In other words, even if teachers have an optimistic attitude, are full of hope for regarding their preschool teaching job, and can see things from different angles in the face of frustration, they may still have emotional labor. According to the argument by Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio (2007), self-efficacy is the faith of an individual being able to, in a certain situation, boost his own motivation, deploy cognitive resources, and take required actions, in order to complete a certain task. Preschool teachers may take proper actions to complete their mission in order to achieve their own goals. Thus, increasing preschool teachers' self-efficacy helps to reduce their emotional labor.

5.2 Reducing Preschool Teachers' Cognition of Commercialization of Emotions

The results of this study show that the preschool teachers" variety of emotions", "requirements for emotional expression", and "deep-level emotional actions" related to emotional labor can be used to predict their psychological capital, while "surface emotional actions" can't. According to Hochschild's argument, in order to meet their employer's requirements, employees will put on a disguise intentionally in order to satisfy their customers' multiple demands. Li and Chen (2006) suggested that preschool teachers have to maintain a certain emotional state during teaching, class management, and during student counseling. Schools may ask teachers to work with an emotional outlook suitable for the educational situation. If this emotion happens to be the opposite of their internal feelings, such as joy or sadness, it may lead to emotional labor loads. However, the results of this study show that surface emotional actions have no predictive effect on psychological capital. Even though the preschool teachers were experiencing emotional labor loads, their surface emotions could not provide feedback as to their psychological capital. It seems like Hochschild's argument cannot be verified in the case of preschool teachers. Preschool teachers' behavior based on their care for children may not be exactly a commercialized expression of emotions. Isenbarger, & Zembylas (2006) and Oplatka (2007) believed that teachers may evaluate their students' responses while teaching them. Sometimes, accepting emotional labor loads is a voluntary behavior.

These researchers have pointed to the fact that teachers voluntarily engage in emotional teaching practices based upon their assessment of student responses, as opposed to the laborers Hochschild describes, who are externally monitored by their employers. The literature also points out that both students and teachers report benefits from the teacher management of emotions in the classroom. Finally, the nature of teaching, as opposed to waitressing or other types of service employment, means that teachers will enter into longer-term relationships with their students, which will sometimes lead them to genuinely care about the learning experiences of their students.

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