



INVESTIGATION OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE TEACHING PROFESSION

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ABSTRACT

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One's perspective on a chosen line of work is the most important factor that affects the caliber of one's professional activities and the degree to which success is achieved in the career. If someone has a positive attitude toward the work that they do, they will be more motivated to work harder at their job and complete their tasks in a timely manner. Preschool education is the first stage of formal instruction that a child might complete as part of its participation in the national education system. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance for preschool instructors to keep a positive attitude toward the field in which they are working. Preschool teaching is a very important job. The purpose of this study is to analyze the perspective that pre-school teachers in Vietnam have towards the field in which they work. The authors of the study carried out a survey in the Central Highlands, asking preschool teachers to rate themselves on one of three separate scales, whereas school administrators rated themselves on just one scale. 347 preschool teachers and 18 managers from establishments that employ preschool instructors participated in the study. Despite the challenging socio-economic conditions, the vast majority of the preschool instructors who took part in the research were found to have a positive attitude about their work. This was the case even if they were working in low-income areas.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes in providing credence to such research theories that concern the level of job satisfaction experienced by those who live and work in challenging situations, in particular those located in remote rural sections of a country.

1. INTRODUCTION

Attitude to the profession is one of the most important factors determining the quality of professional activities and success at work. Many studies on attitude towards the profession showed that a positive attitude to the profession was directly proportional to better teaching practice (Al Harthy, Jamaluddin, & Abedalaziz, 2013). Having a positive attitude towards the profession is the motivation for individuals to work effectively in the profession (Issan, Al-Nabhani, Kazem, & Al-Ani, 2011). For example, if individuals perceive the profession in a correct and positive way, and develop positive feelings about the profession, they will be interested and passionate about the profession and will strive to overcome all difficulties and challenges. On the contrary, if they perceive it

negatively, they will feel lethargic, depressed, working at a coping level, lacking a sense of responsibility and feel heavy losses in material, spiritual and human properties. Attitude is an important content of Psychology. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, attitude has been a subject of interest of psychologists, seriously and scientifically, in both theoretical and practical aspects. Allport (1935) believed that attitude was a fairly broad concept. He considered attitude to be the most important content in social psychology. Attitudes are studied by many schools in the field of psychology with many different approaches (Allport, 1935). Gordon Allport's research and definition of an individual's attitude can be considered as one of the first and directional studies. He assumed that attitude was a state of psychological and neurological readiness that has a guiding or motivating influence in an individual's response to related objects and situations. Most researchers want to come up with their own concept of attitude so there are many different ways to definite the concept of attitude. Researchers such as Worchel and Shebilsue (1994) and Feldman (2005) studied individual attitudes as personal feelings which were relatively stable in social relationships such as those with parents, with friends or through experience.

Attitude is closely related to the individual's perception, behavior, belief, faith, evaluation of others, etc. in life. Gerrig, Zimbardo, Campbell, Cumming, and Wilkes (2015) studied attitude as a positive or negative individual's evaluation of people, objects or ideas. They are especially interested in the relationship between attitudes and behavior of individuals, as well as prejudice and the change of prejudice as an individual change in the condition of changing and supplementing information. Hayes (2000) studied attitude as a state of mental and neurological readiness that could direct or drive an individual's response. In his studies, he noted the distinction between attitudes and values as well as the relationship between attitudes and behavior of individuals. Some researchers are interested in individual's attitudes as core factors of an individual's personality.

In general, in psychology, attitude is considered as the subjective category of the individuals in interaction with the environment or with their own self. Attitudes have the function of orienting, guiding, and motivating individuals to behave in different situations of life. This is shown by researchers in the process of establishing the structure and expression of attitudes. Allport (1935) argued that attitudes were decisive for influencing human actions. Attitudes can be seen as the cause of one person's actions towards another person or an object. On the other hand, the concept of attitude also helps to explain someone's consistent actions.

LaPiere (1934) demonstrated the inconsistency between attitudes and actions in his famous study. LaPiere, which has drawn the conclusion that it is not enough to study attitudes by questionnaire, but to combine research by observing actual actions because, in many situations, the data obtained from the questionnaire is unreliable. From his research, many psychologists have studied deeply to explain the relationship between attitude and action. The first is the Theory of reasoned action (TRA) of Fishbein and Ajzen (1974) who presented a model to predict the intention of action. This model is an important contribution to describing the relationship between attitude and action. Thomas and Znaniecki (1997) were the first to use the term "attitude" when studying the environmental adaptation of Polish farmers who immigrated to the United States. They believe that the main function of attitude is the function of individual adaptation to the social environment. One of the standout studies on the functions of attitudes is that of Katz. According to Katz (1960) attitudes are formed and expressed by certain functions which fulfill some specific individual needs. Attitude has four main functions, including the knowledge function: attitude makes the experience meaningful; the function of regulating social relations; the function of expressing value and the function of protecting the ego. This explains the importance of attitude in human life and activities (Katz, 1960). Based on Katz's studies, many researchers study different functions of attitude.

A research by Adams, Wright, and Lohr (1996) and Pratkanis, Pratkanis, and Aronson (2001) studied attitude as a means of personal defense, helping individuals avoid harmful things. Niemi and Jennings (1991); Dill and Hunter (2010) and Newcomb (1958) studied attitude as a profound expression of personal value systems such as an individual's attitude towards cultural and religious values and family and professional cultural norms. Many studies

also focus on studying the relationship between attitude and cognition and then come to the conclusion that positive attitude promotes the effectiveness of effective memory and perception (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998).

Attitudes are favorable or unfavorable: positive or negative (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998). Attitudes structure can be described in terms of three components including affective component (a person's feelings or emotions), behavioral component (the effects of attitude on behavior) and cognitive component (a person's belief/knowledge) (Rosenberg, Hovland, McGuire, Abelson, & Brehm, 1960) and known as the ABC (Affect, Behavior, Cognition) model. Although, most researchers endorse the ABC model in the structure of attitudes. However, according to some authors, the proportions of cognitive, affective, and behavioral components in attitudes are different that depend on the specific situation and conditions to determine which component dominates the actions of individuals.

One of the topics that have been studied is attitudes towards the profession. Barnard (1938) studied the factors that contribute to a positive attitude to the profession and job satisfaction. The author has analyzed the conditions that attract people to work. Likert (1932) studies the relationship between job satisfaction (positive attitude to the job) which is the condition for forming the optimal attitude to the job at high levels of vocational skills. Kluckhohn (2013) proved that the perception in the attitude to the profession was directly proportional to the employee's work performance. Work efficiency is due to employees having full and correct awareness of their chosen profession. Job satisfaction is considered to be the result of a positive career attitude (Kluckhohn, 2013). Mortimer, Finch, Shanahan, and Ryu (1992) studied the relationship between employee actions and job satisfaction. The findings of this study suggested that job satisfaction was important in predicting employee actions.

Zheng, Bui, Nguyen, and Tran-Chi (2022) discovered a correlation between environmental, interpersonal, institutional, external, and internal factors and career selection. Preschool education is the first level of education in the national education system. This level of education has an important position in the human development strategy. The goal of preschool education is to help children develop physically, emotionally, intellectually, and aesthetically, to form the first elements of personality, to prepare children for the first grade. The team of teachers is the leading factor determining the quality and accomplishing educational goals.

Developing the professional competence of teachers is always a strategic issue of each country, especially in the 21st century, which is considered the century of information technology and knowledge economy: learning, creativity, and openness. Improving teachers' quality is considered an important goal focusing on the fundamental and comprehensive renovation of education, including the contingent of preschool teachers. Hoang et al. (2022) found that the quality of preschool teachers is one of the factors influencing parental satisfaction and willingness to pay for preschools. Preschool teachers are responsible for taking care of and educating children from 0 to 6 years old. The preschool teacher must fulfill the function of mother, teacher, physician, artist and friend of the child at the same time. The object of pedagogical activities of preschool teachers is children from 3 months to 6 years old, whose age is growing rapidly, both physically and psychologically, so preschool teachers not only teach children, but also educate children, take care of, nurture and protect children in all activities at preschool. How the child's personality in the future will depend greatly on the caring, nurturing, educating, and protecting of the preschool teacher. With these specific characteristics, in addition to the professional standard requirements for preschool teachers in terms of quality and capacity, it is extremely important for preschool teachers to have a positive attitude towards the profession. If preschool teachers have a positive attitude to their profession, they will love and respect children; care and educate children enthusiastically and thoughtfully; actively study, foster and improve professional qualifications. Attitude towards teaching profession have been studied in several scientific researches.

Andronache, Bocoş, Bocoş, and Macri (2014) identified attitudes towards teaching profession of the prospective teachers and reported that future teachers had positive attitude towards teaching profession. Besides, authors also revealed that the existence of a positive cognition and beliefs would result in the formation of emotional experiences and positive emotional responses related to the teaching profession. Agcam and Babanoglu (2016) showed that although they had faced problems in job, majority of EFL (English as a foreign language) teachers participating in

their study still had positive attitude toward profession. However, the status of preschool teachers' attitude to the profession is alarming. When the trend of globalization and market economy took place, its negative side also crept in, infiltrated, and affected the professional life of preschool teachers. Many preschool teachers enter the profession not from love and appreciation of the profession, they are not fully aware of the human values and noble meanings of the profession. In addition to the examples of preschool teachers who have a positive attitude to the profession, many preschool teachers have negative expressions, contrary to professional ethical standards, along with child abuse. Almost cases of child abuse by preschool teachers have left serious mental and physical harm to children, causing anger in the public. It can be said that one of the causes of the above heartbreaking cases could be that a part of preschool teachers does not have a positive attitude towards the profession.

Together with the whole country, the Central Highlands carried out the task of fundamental and comprehensive reform in education and made changes in all aspects. In particular, the team of preschool teachers is gradually rejuvenated, enthusiastic and love their job, love children, and have a sense of responsibility in the care and education of children. However, compared to the whole country, the Central Highlands has many difficult socio-economic conditions such as: underdeveloped infrastructure, the interaction of many ethnic groups in a small area, lack of quality human resources and the low average living standard. All of these have a significant impact on the attitude to the profession of preschool teachers, especially in remote and mountainous communes and ethnic minority areas. The infrastructure and physical conditions are still limited, which makes many preschool teachers do not feel secure in their work, and the attitude towards the profession is not positive leading to inefficient professional activities. In recent years, many psychologists have paid much attention to the attitudes towards the profession of workers. However, in Vietnam at present, there is no research on the attitude to the profession of preschool teachers. With the above reasons, we conduct this study to improve the attitude to the profession of preschool teachers in the Central Highlands provinces, thereby improving the quality of preschool teachers.

2. METHODS

2.1. Participants

The study surveyed 347 preschool teachers and 18 managers (from schools of preschool teachers) from the Central Highlands in Vietnam.

Table 1. The characteristics of study participants.

The characteristics of Preschool teachers	N=347	Percentage
Academic level		
College Degree	173	49.9
The Degree of Associate	39	11.2
Intermediate Degree	135	38.9
Working area		
Areas with favorable socio-economic conditions	82	23.6
Areas with difficult socio-economic conditions	188	54.2
Areas with extremely difficult socio-economic conditions	77	22.2
Career Seniority		
1-5 years	93	26.8
6-15 years	98	28.2
16-25 years	84	24.2
Above 25 years	72	20.8
Ethnic groups		
Vietnamese	242	69.7
Minority ethnic groups	105	30.3
Career achievements		
Excellent teacher at provincial level	26	7.5
Excellent teacher at district level	65	18.7
Excellent teacher at school level	102	29.4
Teachers do not achieve the title of excellent teachers	154	44.4

All participants received informed consent after the researchers introduced the aim of the study. The survey questionnaire was distributed and explained to preschool teachers, none of which were eliminated after returned and checked.

The characteristics of study participants are presented in Table 1. The participants represented three areas in the Central Highlands including areas with favorable socio-economic conditions (23.6%), areas with difficult socio-economic conditions (54.2%) and areas with extremely difficult socio-economic conditions (22.2%).

2.2. Measurement

The survey questionnaire for preschool teachers included three scales including Perspective of profession (20 items), Feelings towards profession (24 items) and Actions in profession (24 items). The survey questionnaire for school managers includes 32 items about the attitudes towards profession of preschool teachers. An informed consent was taken from all participants prior to the experiment. The contribution was taken on a completely voluntary basis.

3. RESULTS

The survey result of *Preschool teachers' self-evaluation and the evaluation of managers on attitude towards profession of preschool teachers in the Central Highlands provinces* is presented in Table 2. The findings show that teachers are self-evaluated with higher scores than managers in most fields. Specifically, that there is a significant difference in the evaluation of the attitude towards childcare and education activities between preschool teachers and managers, with preschool teachers ($M=2.95$, $SD=0.86$) self-evaluating a higher score than managers ($M=2.75$, $SD=0.73$). The scores of the attitude towards learning and fostering to improve professional qualifications had a little difference between preschool teachers' self-evaluation ($M=3.44$, $SD=0.79$) and evaluation of managers ($M=3.43$, $SD=0.68$). Similarly, preschool teachers ($M=3.40$, $SD=0.79$) self-evaluated the attitude towards children with a higher score than the score of managers ($M=3.3$, $SD=0.67$). However, the score of the attitude towards career values had no difference between preschool teachers' self-evaluation ($M=2.62$, $SD=0.75$) and evaluation of managers ($M=2.62$, $SD=0.70$).

Table 2. Preschool teachers' self-evaluation and the evaluation of managers on attitude towards profession of preschool teachers in the Central Highlands provinces.

	The fields	Preschool teachers' self-evaluation		The evaluation of managers	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	The attitude towards children	3.40	0.79	3.3	0.67
2	The attitude towards career values	2.62	0.75	2.62	0.70
3	The attitude towards child care and education activities	2.95	0.86	2.75	0.73
4	The attitude towards learning and fostering to improve professional qualifications	3.44	0.79	3.43	0.68
Total score		3.10	0.80	3.01	0.70

The survey result of *Self-evaluation and the evaluation of managers on preschool teachers' feelings towards profession in the Central Highlands provinces* is presented in Table 3. The findings show that teachers self-evaluated with higher scores than managers in all fields. There is a significant difference in scores of Preschool teachers' feelings towards childcare and education activities, with preschool teachers ($M=2.68$, $SD=0.81$) self-evaluating with a higher score than the score of managers ($M=2.54$, $SD=0.74$). Preschool teachers ($M=3.35$, $SD=0.82$) also self-evaluated their feelings towards children with a higher score than the score of managers ($M=3.22$, $SD=0.82$). Similarly, there is a significant difference in scores of Preschool teachers' feelings towards career values, with preschool teachers ($M=2.50$, $SD=0.69$) self-evaluating with a higher score than the score of managers ($M=2.38$, $SD=0.65$). The score of Preschool teachers' feelings towards learning and fostering to improve professional qualifications shows a

difference between preschool teachers' self-evaluation ($M=3.51$, $SD=0.85$) and evaluation of managers ($M=3.42$, $SD=0.82$).

The survey result of *Self-evaluation and the evaluation of managers on preschool teachers' actions in profession in the Central Highlands provinces* is presented in Table 4. The findings show that teachers are self-evaluated with higher scores than managers in all fields.

Table 3. Self-evaluation and the evaluation of managers on preschool teachers' feelings towards profession in the Central Highlands provinces.

No.	The fields	Teachers' self-evaluation		The evaluation of managers	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Preschool teachers' feelings towards children	3.35	0.82	3.22	0.82
2	Preschool teachers' feelings towards career values	2.50	0.69	2.38	0.65
3	Preschool teachers' feelings towards child care and education activities	2.68	0.81	2.54	0.74
4	Preschool teachers' feelings towards learning and fostering to improve professional qualifications	3.51	0.85	3.42	0.82
Total		3.01	0.79	2.89	0.76

Table 4. Self-evaluation and the evaluation of managers on preschool teachers' actions in profession in the Central Highlands provinces.

No.	The fields	Teachers' self-evaluation		The evaluation of managers	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Action in attitude towards children	2.82	0.8	2.67	0.79
2	Action in attitude towards career values	2.67	0.84	2.65	0.8
3	Action in attitude towards childcare and education activities	3.44	0.75	3.38	0.72
4	Action in attitude towards fostering and improving professional qualifications	4.00	0.80	3.8	0.76
Total		3.23	0.80	3.13	0.77

There is a significant difference in scores of Actions in attitude towards fostering and improving professional qualifications, with preschool teachers ($M=4.00$, $SD=0.80$) self-evaluating with a higher score than the score of managers ($M=3.80$, $SD=0.76$). The score of Action in attitude towards children had a difference between preschool teachers' self-evaluation ($M=2.82$, $SD=0.80$) and evaluation of managers ($M=2.67$, $SD=0.79$). Preschool teachers ($M=2.67$, $SD=0.84$) also self-evaluated their Action in attitude towards career values with a higher score than the score of managers ($M=2.65$, $SD=0.80$). There is a significant difference in scores of Actions in attitude towards childcare and education activities, with preschool teachers ($M=3.44$, $SD=0.75$) self-evaluating with a higher score than the score of managers ($M=3.38$, $SD=0.76$).

4. DISCUSSION

We aimed to investigate preschool teachers' attitude towards their profession to improve their quality and practice in teaching. The main finding of our study is that most preschool teachers in the Central Highlands provinces in Vietnam have positive attitude towards profession despite difficult socio-economic conditions. The positive attitude towards teaching profession is also reported in the studies of [Andronache et al. \(2014\)](#) and [Avcam and Babanoglu \(2016\)](#).

The findings of study show preschool teachers had positive attitude towards children, learning and improving professional qualifications. They know that the object of pedagogical activities of preschool teachers is children from 3 months to 6 years old, whose age is growing rapidly, both physically and psychologically. Preschool teachers have to not only teach children, but also educate children, take care of, nurture and protect children in all activities at preschool because they have direct effects on what/how children learn and the environments for

children to interact with (Stronge,2007). However, a number of preschool teachers did not have full awareness of career values which were human values and noble meanings of the teaching profession. This result could imply that those teachers have not found out the meanings of their profession which would motivate them to work and contribute to their overall satisfaction in teaching and success.

The achieved results revealed that preschool teachers also had positive feelings towards children, leaning and fostering to improve professional qualifications. This finding suggested that preschool teachers had full awareness of their responsibility for helping children develop comprehensively and their important position in the human development strategy. They have loved and respected children; cared and educated children enthusiastically and thoughtfully. Additionally, they have actively studied, fostered and improved their professional qualifications.

Jensen, Jensen, and Rasmussen (2017) conducted a study to examine the effects of the intervention on child outcomes and reported that the professional development of preschool teachers affected positively on development and behavior among children aged 3–5, especially children's emotional development and the reduction in emotional and behavioral problems. However, a number of preschool teachers do not have full awareness of childcare and education activities such as physical activities. Preschool teachers should give importance to childcare and educational activities in their classroom activities, apply activities such as physical activity regularly in teaching with a systematic plan.

With research results, the authors suggest that policy makers and educators should take into account seminars and educational programs for preschool teachers to develop and maintain positive attitude towards their profession. Moreover, preschool teachers should develop competencies related to their profession because they have direct effects on what/how children learn and the environments for children to interact with Stronge (2007).

5. CONCLUSION

Attitude to the profession is one of the most important factors determining the quality of professional activities and success at work. Having a positive attitude towards the profession will be the motivation for individuals to work effectively in the profession. In this study, the authors examined the attitude to the profession of preschool teachers in the Central Highlands provinces in Vietnam. The main finding is that most preschool teachers in the study have positive attitude towards profession despite difficult socio-economic conditions. Future research could further study factors influencing the attitude towards the profession of preschool teachers and then suggest models or programs which would develop their positive attitudes.

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