

## The Effect of Emotional Labor on Job Involvement in Preschool Teachers: Verifying the Mediating Effect of Psychological Capital

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### ABSTRACT

In this study, the participants comprised 385 preschool teachers. The relationship among their emotional labor, Job Involvement, and psychological capital were examined using hierarchical regression analysis. In addition, whether psychological capital exerted a mediating effect on Job Involvement was investigated. The results show that “deep acting exerted” the strongest influence on Job Involvement in preschool teachers and that high psychological capital alleviated their emotional burden. Moreover, “self-efficacy” and “optimism” mitigated the need for psychological satisfaction of work in preschool teachers. In addition, “optimism” exerted a mediating effect on the relationship between emotional labor and Job Involvement in preschool teachers.

**Key words:** Emotional Labor, Job Involvement, Psychological Capital, Preschool Teachers

### INTRODUCTION

In modern society, many preschool children must be accompanied by a preschool teacher throughout this critical period of their lives. In recent years, first-line professionals providing preschool services have encountered an increasing number of difficulties when sustainably running their preschool businesses because of a declining birth rate and unclear childcare policies (Lee & Chen, 2006). These preschool teachers, who must interact with children and adults every day, must continually control their emotions to complete their jobs. When students perform favorably at school, their preschool teachers must actively praise and encourage them, and when the students’ performance is poor, the preschool teachers must manage the students’ deviant behaviors calmly and with confidence. To achieve these professional goals, preschool teachers are sometimes required to show or exaggerate certain emotions or to reduce or suppress certain emotions. In fact, teaching requires emotional engagement as well as technical and cognitive engagement. In addition to managing students, preschool teachers must manage requirements from parents and various administrative bodies. Thus, the role which preschool teachers play is that of an emotional laborer (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Johnson et al., 2005; Kamerman, 2000; Näring, Briet & Brouwers, 2006).

According to the definition of emotional labor (EL) in the context of education proposed by Hochschild (1983), students are similar to customers, and operating a school is similar to managing a company that must sell products and service customers. Teachers commonly interact with people and may address various emotional problems at work. Many studies have suggested that, because of external pressures, teachers who cannot address their emotions promptly experience work stress. After prolonged stress, teachers may become exhausted and tire of their jobs. This fatigue can exert an extremely negative influence on teachers’ physical and psychological health and on the quality of their teaching (Mark & Anderson, 1987; Pakarinen et al., 2010).

Society holds idealized images of teachers, but these images do not deprive them of personal agency in the classroom (Oplatka, 2007). Teachers voluntarily engage in emotional teaching practices on the basis of their assessment of student responses. Researchers have used “emotional work” to describe the choices teachers make when implementing emotions in the classroom (Caires & Almeida, 2007; Fu, 2011; Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006; Op’t Eynde & Turner, 2006). The emotions that preschool teachers must address at work concern more than labor. Teachers enter a working environment where they experience children’s sweetness and innocence and can perform their job with a positive attitude (Fu, 2011). This positive attitude is their psychological capital (PsyCap), which can influence their individual growth and development and improve their performance (Luthans, Avey, Avolio & Norman, 2007). Teaching is an emotionally draining profession. Teachers continually devote themselves to their profession both emotionally and intellectually. Teaching is labor requiring a considerable depletion of emotions (Hargreaves, 1998; Heck & Williams, 1984).

Pugh (2001) noted that many studies of EL have focused on job requirements, ignoring the roles of environmental factors and individual conditions; in other words, teachers’ psychological conditions and identification with their job should be considered in the study of preschool teachers’ EL. Emotional labor may lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout, while influences of some psychological capital are also involved (Jensen & Luthans, 2006; Wu, 2010). The findings obtained by exploring the relationships amongst EL, job

involvement (Job-in), and PsyCap as well as the intermediating effects of the PsyCap of preschool teachers can serve as references for preschools, preschool teachers, and institutions of preschool-teacher education and enable preschool teachers to understand their emotional states and increase their Job-in through improved PsyCap, thereby facilitating children's learning and development.

The purposes of this study are the following:

- (a) To explore the relationships amongst preschool teachers' EL, Job-in, and PsyCap
- (b) To explore whether the intermediating effect of PsyCap on the relationship between preschool teachers' EL on their Job-in is significant.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Definition of Emotional Labour and Related Studies

The concept of EL was first proposed by Hochschild (1983), he believed that the cabin crew's emotional expressions followed rules that were mandated by their employer and required them to fake their emotions to please their customers. EL has gradually become a concern and has been broadly discussed in education and other disciplines (Roulston, 2004). At work, emotional laborers may express positive and happy emotions to create a joyful working atmosphere, negative and somber emotions to create an atmosphere that establishes a psychological distance between them and customers, or neutral and impartial emotions to project a professional image (Hochschild, 1983; Wharton, 1993; Morris & Feldman, 1996). In other words, EL is the manner in which employees control their personal emotions at work to meet the expectations of their employer and use their words and body language to make customers feel cared for, safe and happy during interactions (Hochschild, 1983). Studies using teachers as research subjects have suggested that teachers are emotional laborers (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Roulston, 2004). Teachers in preschools are first-line professionals tasked with interacting with students and parents. These professionals are both technical and childcare personnel. According to the categorization by Hochschild (1983), they are laborers bearing a high emotional load.

The meaning of EL can be analyzed from two aspects: the suppression and expression of emotions in job-focused EL and deep-level and surface strategies of emotional actions in job-focused EL (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). Job-focused EL is the emotional regulation required for a job. Service-sector jobs that require employees to control their emotions whilst serving customers and to harness emotions to portray a certain work-role expectation involve job-focused EL (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). In this context, the "variety of emotions" (VE) refers to the spectrum of emotional responses expected of employees when interacting with people of different backgrounds, on different occasions, and in different places (Wharton, 1993). When a job requires more frequent and complex changes in emotional states from employees at work, and employees must expend additional effort to anticipate all possible situations and plan for appropriate responses, the employees are considered to engage in a high level of EL (Morris & Feldman, 1996). In contexts demanding a high level of EL, employees show positive emotions and hide negative emotions at work because of emotion-related regulations established by the company or organization for which they work (Wharton & Erickson, 1995). The positive or negative expression of emotions is regulated to a certain degree. The emotional performance of employees must meet the expected standards of their roles.

Employee-focused EL entails individualized and active management of work emotions and covers all active efforts to adjust those emotions (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). Employee-focused EL involves two types of active efforts for self-adjustment and regulation: surface emotional actions (SEAs) and deep-level emotional actions (DEAs). An SEA is the outward appearance that employees use to disguise or control the expression of their emotions whilst their true, inside feelings remain the same, satisfying the needs of their work life (Grandey, 2000). A DEA is an internalization process for emotional management used to accept the social standards of an organization and begins with adjusting the internal thinking and feeling systems of emotion control (Hochschild, 1983).

EL can be classified into job-focused EL, such as the regulation of emotional expressions by organizations to control public perceptions and the emotional complexity of emotions to be shown by employees in public places, and employee-focused EL, such as the surface emotional disguises worn by employees to adapt to their job requirements and the internalization of deep emotional needs. Job-focused EL stresses employees' psychological feelings regarding emotional demands at work, whereas employee-focused EL stresses employees' efforts in emotional adjustment.

On the basis of the argument by Hochschild (1983) and the EL loading scale developed by Lin (2000), Lee and Chen (2006) developed an EL scale for preschool teachers that incorporated the opinions and suggested modifications of domain experts regarding the EL of preschool teachers in the job field and divided EL into four

constructs: VE, requirements for emotional expression (REE) in job-focused EL, and SEA and DEA in employee-focused EL. The scale was used as the measurement tool in this study because its formation and development aligned with the study's purpose.

### **Definition of Job Involvement and Related Studies**

Job-in was first proposed by Lodahl and Kejner (1965). They defined it as the degree to which employees identify with their jobs or the degree of importance that employees' jobs have to employees' self-worth. Soon after Lodahl and Kejner proposed the concept of Job-in, researchers began to pay close attention to Job-in (Robinowitz & Hall, 1977). Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) adopted an idea opposite to that of job burnout, suggesting that when employees dedicate considerable energy to a job, they can enter an efficient working state in which they relate well with others although being tired of working. The three features of Job-in are involvement, efficacy, and energy. When these features are transformed in reverse, or when an employee changes from being energetic to exhausted, from being involved to distant, and from being efficient to inefficient, burnout occurs. Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá and Bakker (2002) followed this thinking model, suggesting that high positive power enables resisting job burnout. They proposed that Job-in is based on pleasure and the activation of well-being. They defined Job-in as an active and satisfactory emotional and cognitive state associated with a job. The characteristics of this state include constancy and diffusivity. The state is not in connection with a certain goal, event, or situation but involves a positive experience of high energy and concentration whilst identifying strongly with work. Job-in is employees' cognition of the value of their work.

Hackman and Lawer (1971) believed that the degree of Job-in experienced by employees can be influenced by their self-respect and performance. In other words, when employees perceive that their job performance can facilitate satisfying their need for self-respect and can be improved through their efforts, they expend more energy at work. Therefore, Job-in is the main factor contributing to self-growth and satisfaction and a crucial factor for self-encouragement and goal orientation. The degree of employees' Job-in is related not only to their psychology and behavior but also to their performance at work (Kanungo, 1982). Kanungo (1982) suggested that past definitions of Job-in were too broad, resulting in low-precision measurement tools; therefore, he categorized Job-in into job involvement (JI) and work involvement (WI). JI refers to employees' faith in their current jobs and the degree to which those jobs can satisfy their personal needs, and WI refers to the value of work and its importance in the employees' lives. Therefore, Kanungo (1982) believed that two main factors influence Job-in and indicate employees' current internal and external needs and the possibility that the employees perceive that their jobs meet those needs. This study defined JI as employees' degree of identification with work, their jobs, and their external behaviors and attitudes and their degree of identification with the crucial influence of their job performance on their self-worth. This study adopted Kanungo's viewpoint regarding the constructs which comprise the JI scale.

### **Definition of Psychological Capital and Related Studies**

Discussion of the origin of PsyCap should begin by considering positive psychology, which focuses on people's positive capabilities instead of on their previous negative experiences (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Seligman, 2012). Positive psychology is the science of subjective experiences, positive personal traits, and positive organization with the purpose of improving quality of life and preventing morbid states (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Positive psychology aims to study how the quality of human life can be improved. The core concept of PsyCap centers on ameliorating human lives (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007).

According to economics, capital is a valuable asset by which individuals and organizations create wealth. Luthans et al. (2004) suggested that, in the twenty-first century, a hypercompetitive environment, the competitive advantages of previous economic capital, human capital, and social capital cannot endure for long. PsyCap focuses on personal psychological qualities, such as "who you are" and "what you can become," according to a development-oriented viewpoint (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007). PsyCap cannot be obtained from the outside. It is different from human capital and social capital, which are influenced by high purchase costs and labor migration (Lee, 2009). PsyCap can help enterprises gain a greater competitive advantage in the marketplace. For individuals, PsyCap is an essential factor that facilitates personal growth and development and improves performance (Luthans, Avey, Avolio & Norman, 2007).

PsyCap is a combination of the concepts of positive psychology and capital; it consists of four constructs: self-efficacy (Self), optimism (Opt), hope (Hope), and resilience (Res) (Luthans et al., 2004; Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007). PsyCap can be defined as having confidence, or Self, to take on and put in the effort necessary to succeed at challenging tasks; persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (Hope); constructing a positive attribution (Opt) to succeed now and in the future; and enduring or recovering from problems and adversity to succeed (Res) (Luthans et al., 2004; Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007). People rich in

PsyCap have confidence in themselves, are hopeful and resilient, and extend themselves with positive, active attitudes (Avey, Wernsing & Luthans, 2008; Luthans & Youssef, 2007). On the basis of the core concept of PsyCap proposed by Luthans et al. (2007), this study aimed to explore the PsyCap of preschool teachers from four aspects: Self, Opt, Hope, and Res.

**Relationships amongst Emotional Labor, Job Involvement, and Psychological Capital**

Teaching is tiring in an invisible way (Chiang 2002). Lord and Harvey (2002) suggested that when employees’ JI is high, they may reappraise or redefine their work. The emotional loads that teachers bear may change according their personal adjustments. This change can, in turn, influence their JI (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). EL can lead to emotional exhaustion, followed by job burnout and low JI (Wu & Cheng, 2006; Grandey, 2000). Thus, this study proposed hypothesis [H1]:

*[H1] Preschool teachers’ EL influences their JI.*

According to the argument of Hochschild (1983), preschool teachers who interact with parents and children everyday must continually control their emotions to achieve their professional goals. Preschool teachers engage in a high level of EL (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Kamerman, 2000). Preschool teachers pay a high emotional price when teaching children and interacting with parents. At times, they must use positive energy from their personal traits to encourage themselves and remain dedicated to their work. This PsyCap, including positive energy, positive thinking related to goal achievement, optimistic self-motivation, and the capability to make adjustments after frustration, can significantly and positively influence a person’s JI (May, Gilson, and Harter 2004). Thus, this study proposed hypothesis [H2]:

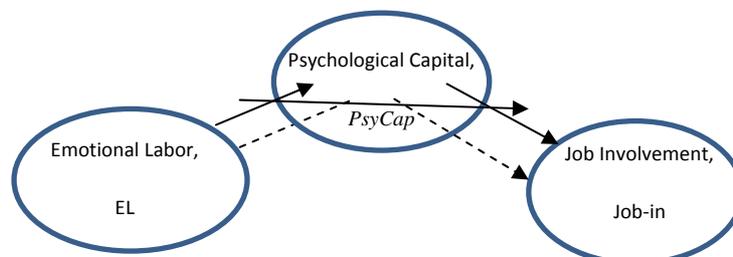
*[H2] Preschool teachers’ EL influences their PsyCap.*

PsyCap is the positive energy in a preschool teacher’s personal traits. Kahn (1990) believed that JI is mainly influenced by psychological conditions such as psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Psychological meaningfulness is the value gained from a work goal or purpose and is judged in relation to a person's ideals or standards. Psychological safety is the experience of being able to act in a manner that is natural to that person and being able to use and employ all skills and knowledge in a role without fear of being ridiculed or of experiencing negative consequences. Psychological availability is the capability to engage as a result of having cognitive, emotional and physical resources. Previous studies on PsyCap have emphasized that its individual elements can facilitate an employee's job satisfaction, organizational commitment, sales performance, leadership effectiveness, and work effectiveness whilst reducing personal work pressure and demission rates and increasing organizational drive, transformation, and productivity (Avey, Patera & West, 2006; Peterson, Luthans, Avolio, Walumbwa, Zhang, 2011). Thus, this study proposed hypothesis [H3]:

*[H3] Preschool teachers’ PsyCap influences their JI.*

This study integrated hypotheses [H1], [H2], and [H3] and verified that the EL and PsyCap of preschool teachers are related to their JI. Many studies have used PsyCap as a mediating variable and found the mediating effect of PsyCap to be statistically significant. The greater the mediating effect is, the more favorable a person’s subjective perception and the higher an employee’s job satisfaction are (Chung, 2009; Huang, 2009; Jensen & Luthans, 2006; Wu, 2010). Thus, this study proposed hypothesis [H4]:

*[H4] Preschool teachers’ EL influences their JI through the mediating effect of their PsyCap.*



**Figure 1** Structural model for hypotheses

## METHODS

### Participants

The population sampled in this study comprised all 450,004 preschool teachers in Taiwan (Department of Statistics, Ministry of Education, 2014). The required sample size, a given percentage of the population, was calculated. The conditions  $n = Z^2 * p(1 - p)/\epsilon^2$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ ,  $p = .50$ , and  $\epsilon = 0.05$  were used to determine that the minimal required sample size was 384.16. Through numerical analysis, Krejcie and Morgan (1970) determined that the sample size should be 384. In consideration of the aforementioned conclusions, specifically, the sample size needed to be at least 5% of the population size and the estimated error needed to be within  $\pm 0.50\%$  (confidence level: 95%) according to population size, 500 preschool teachers were selected for the survey. After invalid questionnaires were excluded, the valid sample size was 390, representing a response rate of 78%.

### Research Tools

The research tools used in this study were an EL scale for preschool teachers, a PsyCap scale for preschool teachers, and a JI scale for preschool teachers. These scales were administered to the sampled research participants. Lee and Chen (2006) developed an EL scale for preschool teachers on the basis of the argument by Hochschild (1983) and the EL loading scale developed by Lin (2000). The EL scale was further modified after subject-matter experts provided opinions and suggestions regarding the preschool teachers' EL in the job field. This scale divides EL into four constructs, VE ( $\alpha = .896$ ), REE ( $\alpha = .836$ ), SEA ( $\alpha = .797$ ), and DEA ( $\alpha = .882$ ), and comprises 20 items.

The PsyCap scale for preschool teachers was created by Lee (2009), who referred to the PsyCap questionnaire developed by Luthans et al. (2007), the hope scale developed by Snyder et al. (2003), the life orientation test developed by Scheier and Carver (1985), and the resiliency scale developed by Baron and Kenny (1986), and contains 20 items and 4 factors, Self ( $\alpha = .886$ ), Hope ( $\alpha = .971$ ), Opt ( $\alpha = .954$ ), and Res ( $\alpha = .967$ ), in total.

The JI scale for preschool teachers was a revision of the JI scale developed by Kanungo (1982) with the terminology of the items being modified by a group of experts so that the items more closely resembled the characteristics of a preschool teacher's job. This scale contains 10 items and 2 factors, JI ( $\alpha = .773$ ) and WI ( $\alpha = .605$ ).

The items in the questionnaire used in this study were ranked on a Likert 6-point scale, which was employed to ensure that the participants could not provide a neutral answer (no opinion). The choices were agree strongly (6), agree (5), "agree slightly" (4), "disagree slightly" (3), "disagree" (2), and "disagree strongly" (1).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Current Status of Preschool Teachers' Emotional Labor, Psychological Capital, and Job Involvement

The empirical data from 385 preschool teachers were collected, descriptive statistics were calculated, and relationships amongst the constructs were analyzed. Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the four factors of the preschool teachers' EL: VE, REE, SEA, and DEA. The participants' REE scores were the highest ( $M = 5.20$ ;  $SD = .67$ ), followed by their VE scores ( $M = 4.99$ ;  $SD = .74$ ), DEA scores ( $M = 4.88$ ;  $SD = .71$ ), and SEA scores ( $M = 4.42$ ;  $SD = .78$ ). All of the preschool teachers' scores for the four factors of EL were high; in other words, their EL scores were high. In particular, the scores indicated that REE was the highest emotional load that they perceived.

According to the descriptive statistics on the participants' scores for the four factors of PsyCap, the scores for Hope were the highest ( $M = 4.84$ ;  $SD = .66$ ), followed those for Self ( $M = 4.83$ ;  $SD = .69$ ), Opt ( $M = 4.76$ ;  $SD = .76$ ), and Res ( $M = 4.61$ ;  $SD = .79$ ). All of the preschool teachers' average scores for the four factors of PsyCap were close to 5 and to each other. These findings indicate that the teachers had substantial PsyCap.

According to the descriptive statistics on the participants' scores for the two factors of Job-in: JI and WI, the participants' JI scores were high ( $M = 4.38$ ;  $SD = .88$ ). The average WI was 2.74, which is lower than the median, 3, and the standard error was 1.14. The results showed that the preschool teachers' faith in their job was rather high and indicated that their job satisfied their personal needs to a high degree. By contrast, the value they obtained from their job and their perceived importance of their job in life were rather low, with high individual differences.

### Relationships amongst Preschool Teachers' Emotional Labor, Psychological Capital, and Job Involvement

All relationships amongst the three constructs of EL, PsyCap, and JI (Table 1) as well as the relationships of WI with Hope, Opt, Res, and DEA (which were not significant) exhibited between-variable correlations between .083 and .334. These results indicated that the value preschool teachers obtained from their jobs and the

importance they perceived their jobs to have in their lives did not change because of their individual Hope, Opt, or Res scores. Although the preschool teachers may have had superior strategies for adjusting their emotions, the resulting scores were not related to the value obtained from their jobs. Furthermore, the correlations of JI with VE, REE, and Self were negative. Both VE and REE was job-focused EL; in other words, they entail expressing emotions in response to different work situations and to meet expectations for their role at work. Therefore, when expectations of the preschool teachers' emotions were high, their perceived value at work was low. In other words, the more preschool teachers had to change their emotional expression according to the needs of situations at work, the less they could devote themselves to the actual work of preschool teaching. The correlation between WI and Self was negative. Lawler and Hall (1970) suggested that people's JI is the importance of work in their lives. People with high JI can be influenced because they perceive their jobs to be a crucial part of their self-worth. The results of this study show that the higher the preschool teachers' perceived value of their job and their perceived importance of the job in their lives were, the lower their perceived Self was. The preschool teachers' perceived value at work and their Self were not consistent; therefore, the correlation was negative.

All correlations of JI with the four variables of PsyCap were positive. The higher the preschool teachers' faith in their job was, the higher their PsyCap was, and vice versa. Furthermore, although the correlation between JI and WI was significant, the correlation coefficient was rather low (.127). The research results showed that preschool teachers thought that their job could satisfy their needs, yet they also thought that the job was not vital to their personal lives. Kanungo (1982) suggested that JI may change. People's JI may change when their perception of the degree to which their needs are being met changes. Therefore, although the preschool teachers had high personal faith regarding their JI, the value they obtained at work and the importance of their job in their lives did not increase accordingly.

**Table 1** The relationships among preschool teachers' emotional labor construct, psychological capital construct, and job involvement construct N=385

Construct	Variable	Mean	SD	Correlations									
				VE	REE	SEA	DEA	Self	Hope	Opt	Res	JI	WI
EL	VE	4.99	.74	1									
	REE	5.20	.67	.752*	1								
	SEA	4.42	.78	.450*	.412*	1							
	DEA	4.88	.71	.637*	.712*	.504*	1						
PsyCap	Self	4.83	.69	.571*	.530*	.334*	.560*	1					
	Hope	4.84	.66	.653*	.618*	.365*	.651*	.803*	1				
	Opt	4.76	.76	.660*	.645*	.357*	.622*	.658*	.715*	1			
	Res	4.61	.79	.661*	.627*	.358*	.654*	.657*	.710*	.801*	1		
Job-in	JI	4.38	.88	.441*	.480*	.367*	.613*	.523*	.527*	.614*	.566*	1	
	WI	2.75	1.14	-.108*	-.134*	.320*	.049	-.109*	-.067	-.056	-.044	.127*	1

\* p < .05

Both the preschool teachers' EL and PsyCap were high, verifying the argument that preschool teachers engage in a high level of EL (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Johnson et al., 2005; Kamerman, 2000; Näring, Briet & Brouwers, 2006). PsyCap is a crucial psychological factor that supports preschool teachers (Pugh, 2001). Working in an environment with a high level of EL, preschool teachers require excellent psychological condition to expend the emotions and release the stress experienced in their jobs. In response to the trend of decreasing birth rates in Taiwan, preschools extend their childcare hours, and teachers must engage in services such as daytime transport and recruitment. All of these tasks at work have exerted great pressure on preschool teachers (Lin & Tsai, 2002; Chang & Hung, 2008). However, preschool teachers' self-cognition remains high, assisting them in slightly reducing their emotional loads. In the JI construct, according to the preschool teachers' self-reported information, their performance in JI was rather high. Their faith in their job was high and their personal needs were met to a certain degree. However, the average WI score in the 6-point scale was only 2.75 points, meaning that the value and importance of the job were not sufficient to make the preschool teachers willing to become more devoted to their work.

**Influences of the Constructs**

*1. Regression Analysis of the Effect of Preschool Teachers' Emotional Labor on Their Job Involvement*

This study applied the hierarchical regression method with EL as the independent variable to explore the

influence of EL on JI. As shown in Table 2, the VE construct of EL significantly and negatively influenced WI ( $\beta = -.196, p < .05$ ), but did not significantly influence JI. These results indicated that the more preschool teachers expressed emotions required by their work setting for the overall benefit of their preschool, the less important they believed their job to be in their lives and the lower their sense of value was; conversely, the faith they held in their jobs was not influenced.

REE significantly and negatively influenced WI ( $\beta = -.272, p < .05$ ), but had no significant influence on JI. The results showed that the more the preschool teachers exhibited positive emotions and hid negative emotions for the organizational benefits of the preschool for which they worked, the less they identified with the value of their job; however, their faith in their work was not influenced.

SEA significantly influenced WI ( $\beta = .449, p < .05$ ), but had no significant influence on JI. The results indicated that the preschool teachers' personal emotional disguises facilitated increasing their perceived importance of their job in life; however, their perceived satisfaction of their psychological needs was not influenced. The influences of the DEA on both WI ( $\beta = .141, p < .05$ ) and JI ( $\beta = .076, p < .05$ ) were significant. The results showed that the preschool teachers' methods for adjusting their emotions increased the satisfaction of their psychological needs and their perceived importance of their jobs in life. Thus, the hypothesis stating that preschool teachers' EL influences their JI, [H1], was supported.

**Table 2** The regression analysis of preschool teachers' emotional labor on their job involvement N=385

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	
	JI	WI
<b>Emotional Labor, EL</b>		
VE	.043	-.196*
REE	.056	-.272*
SEA	.054	.449*
DEA	.076*	.141*
F	58.245*	24.559*
P	.000	.000
Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.377	.200

Note: The regression coefficients shown in the table are standardized  $\beta$  coefficients

\* $p < .05$

**2. Regression Analysis of the Effect of Preschool Teachers' Emotional Labor on Their Psychological Capital**

This study applied the hierarchical-regression method with EL as the independent variable to explore the influence of EL on PsyCap. As shown in Table 3, the influences of the VE on Self ( $\beta = .325, p < .05$ ), Opt ( $\beta = .347, p < .05$ ), and Res ( $\beta = .362, p < .05$ ) were significant; the influences of REE on Hope ( $\beta = .060, p < .05$ ) and Opt ( $\beta = .201, p < .05$ ) were significant; and the influences of DEA on Self ( $\beta = .300, p < .05$ ), Hope ( $\beta = .363, p < .05$ ), Opt ( $\beta = .265, p < .05$ ), and Res ( $\beta = .360, p < .05$ ) were significant. The influences of SEA on all four aspects of PsyCap were not significant. The results indicated that, when the preschool teachers were willing to change their emotion adjustment strategies, their PsyCap increased. However, when they merely disguised or faked their emotions, their PsyCap was not influenced. Overall, the hypothesis stating that preschool teachers' EL influences their PsyCap, [H2], was supported.

**Table 3** The regression analysis of preschool teachers' emotional labor on their psychological capital N=385

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable			
	Self	Hope	Opt	Res
<b>Emotional Labor, EL</b>				
VE	.325*	.051	.347*	.362*
REE	.068	.060*	.201*	.111
SEA	.009	-.019	-.016	-.032
DEA	.300*	.363*	.265*	.360*
F	60.402*	102.551*	100.544*	106.771*
P	.000	.000	.000	.000
Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.386	.518	.513	.528

Note: The regression coefficients shown in the table are standardized  $\beta$  coefficients

\* $p < .05$

**3. Regression Analysis of the Effect of Preschool Teachers’ Psychological Capital on Their Job Involvement**

This study applied the hierarchical regression method with PsyCap as the independent variable to explore the influence of PsyCap on JI. As shown in Table 4, the influence of the Self aspect of PsyCap on JI ( $\beta = .158, p < .05$ ) was significant, as was the influence of Opt on JI ( $\beta = .377, p < .05$ ). Therefore, the hypothesis stating that preschool teachers’ PsyCap influences their JI, [H3], was supported. Yet, this analysis yielded unexpected results; the influences of all four aspects of PsyCap on WI were not significant. The results showed that, regardless of how high the preschool teachers’ PsyCap was, it did not influence their perceived importance of their jobs in their lives and sense of value. However, Self and Opt helped them to meet their psychological needs at work.

**Table 4** The regression analysis of preschool teachers’ psychological capital on their job involvement N=385

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable		
	JI	WI	
<b>Psychological Capital (PsyCap)</b>	Self	.158*	-.162
	Hope	.033	.041
	Opt	.377*	-.016
	Res	.136	.047
F	64.739*		1.300
P	.000		.270
Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.403		.003

Note: The regression coefficients shown in the table are standardized  $\beta$  coefficients  
\* $p < .05$

**4. Mediating Effects of Preschool Teachers’ Psychological Capital**

This study applied the hierarchical regression method to explore the mediating effects of the preschool teachers’ PsyCap and referred to the argument by Baron and Kenny (1986) to verify that preschool teachers’ EL significantly influences their JI through the mediating effect of their PsyCap.

**Table 5** The regression analysis of the mediation effects preschool teachers’ psychological capital on their emotional labor and job involvement N=385

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable			
	Job-in	PsyCap	Job-in	Job-in
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<b>Emotional Labor (EL)</b>	VE	.033	.389*	-.145
	REE	.025	.134*	.058
	SEA	.072	-.015	.080
	DEA	.498*	.363*	.350*
<b>Psychological Capital (PsyCap)</b>	Self		.090	.086
	Hope		.075	.004
	Opt		.334*	.423*
	Res		.162	.094
F	47.064*	150.397*	52.906*	55.438*
P	.000	.000	.000	.000
Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.328	.568	.355	.413

Note: The regression coefficients shown in the table are standardized  $\beta$  coefficients  
\* $p < .05$

First, as shown in Models 1 and 2 of Table 5, the influence of the DEA construct of EL on JI ( $\beta = .498, p < .05$ ) was significant, as were the influences of the VE, REE, and DEA constructs on PsyCap ( $\beta = .389, p < .05$ ;  $\beta = .134, p < .05$ ;  $\beta = .363, p < .05$ ). These results verified the first step in the argument by Baron and Kenny (1986) that EL (independent variable) significantly influences JI (dependent variable) and PsyCap (intervening variable).

Second, as shown in Model 3 of Table 5, the influence of the Opt aspect of PsyCap on JI ( $\beta = .334, p < .05$ ) was positive and significant. This result verified the second step from the argument by Baron and Kenny (1986) that PsyCap (intervening variable) significantly influences JI (dependent variable).

Third, as shown in Model 4 of Table 5, the influence of the DEA construct of EL on JI decreased from .498 to .350, and that of the Opt aspect of PsyCap on JI increased from .334 to .423. These results showed that the influence of DEA on JI was replaced by the influence of Opt, resulting in the decrease in the influence of DEA on JI in Model 4. In this case, the mediating effect of Opt was required to increase the influence on JI. Therefore, the hypothesis that preschool teachers' EL influences their JI through the mediating effect of their PsyCap, [H4], was supported.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

### **Adjusting Emotions Whilst Playing a Professional Role at Work Reduced Preschool Teachers' Perceived Job Value**

Preschool teachers must cope with pressure from various sources. For example, they must interact with students, parents, and administrators. According to the categories defined by Hochschild (1983), preschool teachers engage in a high level of EL. Wu (2003) suggested that, when an employee performs EL at work, the main factor ensuring smooth completion of tasks is "taking job considerations seriously." Employees must follow regulations regarding the emotion adjustments required for their job positions to complete their tasks smoothly (the display rule) (Ekman, 1984; Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). The findings of this study show that such job-focused EL (VE and REE) cannot be used to predict JI; in other words, the preschool teachers' self-belief could not be determined according to the role that they play in the job field. However, the predictive effect of EL on WI was negative. This result indicated that the more preschool teachers follow the rules of emotional expression for their professional role at work, the lower their perceived value of their job was. Furthermore, this phenomenon shows that, although preschool teachers engage in a high level of EL, the application of commoditization of emotions to their work requires further discussion, because when preschool teachers teach, they may evaluate their students' responses, and they may accept emotional loads higher than they would of their own free will. Previous studies have emphasized the fact that teachers voluntarily engage in emotional teaching practices according to their assessment of student responses, as opposed to the laborers that Hochschild describes, who are externally monitored by employers (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006; Oplatka, 2007). In relevant studies, both students and teachers reported receiving benefits from the teachers' management of emotions in the classroom. Finally, the task of teaching, as opposed to waitressing and other service tasks, involves long-term relationships with students, leading teachers to genuinely care for their students' learning.

### **Preschool Teachers' Sincere Emotional Expressions Can Facilitate Increasing Their Psychological Capital**

Grandey (2000) believed that SEAs are an approach that employees use to exaggerate and control the expression of their emotions and serve as an emotional disguise whilst their true feelings remain unchanged. The results of this study results showed that the influence of the preschool teachers' SEAs on any of the four PsyCap variables was no significant. The exaggeration or control of emotions performed to meet requirements at their jobs or in their lives did not seem to be a desire of the preschool teachers. Although the preschool teachers' PsyCap was high, they had to accommodate multiple job facets at work. Consequently, the main purpose of their role did not take precedence and their role became unfocused. When the tasks to be performed for their role are unclear, their identification with their job might decrease (Chang & Hung, 2008). Expressing false emotions to please customers is not an easy task for preschool teachers. By contrast, the preschool teachers' DEAs could be used to predict the results for all four PsyCap variables. A DEA is an internalization process for emotional management that a person uses to change his or her emotional control model and accept organizational socialization and is initiated by adjusting the internal thinking and feeling systems of emotional control (Hochschild, 1983). A DEA requires applying additional effort to control true feelings.

Although preschool teachers had to bear loads of EL at work, their PsyCap was still quite high. This finding is consistent with the argument by Hargreaves (2001) that teachers may show various emotions in the course of their careers, including positive emotions such as love, caring, trust, and encouragement as well as negative emotions such as irritation, guilt, shame, anger, envy, and frustration. Bearing the same EL, some people can enjoy themselves, whereas others are in pain, acquiring various methods for coping (Hochschild, 1997). Although preschool teachers at work can use SEAs to pretend and please children and parents, SEAs do not facilitate increasing PsyCap. However, when preschool teachers sincerely change their internal processes of emotional control and address their EL wholeheartedly, their PsyCap increases, and the institutions which employ them benefit. This is one potential reason why the teachers remained enthusiastic.

### **Self-Efficacy and Optimism Can Facilitate Satisfying Preschool Teachers' Psychological Needs**

People are the main conduit of all value conversions. PsyCap cannot be obtained outside a person; it results from a person's psychological state. PsyCap is the sum of a person's psychological resources beyond human capital and social capital. Systematic investment and development facilitating convert this active psychological state into a competitive advantage (Luthans, Avey & Avolio, 2006). The results of this study showed that all of the preschool teachers' scores for the four variables of PsyCap were high. The competitiveness of the teachers' internal positive resources was high. The Self and Opt aspects of PsyCap proved to be valuable influences on JI and were vital resources preschool teachers used to remain active and positive.

### **Optimism Mediates the Influence of Preschool Teachers' Emotional Labor on Their Job Involvement**

The EL of the preschool teachers was high. They had to continually adjust and exaggerate their emotional expression. The adjustment of emotions by preschool teachers according to their personal roles led to a negative influence on their JI. Here, Opt played a mediating role, slightly increasing the preschool teachers' JI. Optimistic people regard their jobs with a degree of expectation. Optimistic employees can positively interpret future developments in their job fields, develop active emotions to widen their thinking and behavioral models, accept new concepts, and exert efforts to achieve innovative performance (Carr, 2004). One of this study's hypotheses is that preschool teachers' EL influences their JI through the mediating effect of PsyCap. Amongst the four factors of PsyCap, Opt was proven to have a mediating effect. Opt is a belief system involving positive expectations regarding the future as well as an active psychological state of PsyCap for interpreting work events in a positive direction according to surface characteristics (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). When preschool teachers devote themselves to their job, although it requires substantial amounts EL, they are often able to continue being devoted to and passionate in their work because of the effect of a particular psychological factor, their optimism.

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