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ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

Job Satisfaction, Work Engagement, and OCB in Preschool Teachers: A Review of Mediating Mechanisms

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Abstract— Preschool education serves as the foundation of a child's academic and socio-emotional development, and the role of preschool teachers is pivotal in shaping this early learning experience. This research examines the relationships among Job Satisfaction (JS), Work Engagement (WE), and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) in preschool teachers, with a focus on identifying key mediating mechanisms. A sample of 408 preschool teachers is surveyed using a structured questionnaire. The instrument demonstrated high content validity and excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.962). Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to measure the proposed model's fit with empirical data and to assess both the indirect and direct effects among variables. OCB is the dependent variable, JS is the independent variable, and the key mediating variables are WE, Psychological Empowerment (PE), and Emotional Intelligence (EI). JS had substantial direct effects on WE (β = 0.621), PE (β = 0.538), and EI (β = 0.492). Therefore, the WE (β = 0.683), PE (β = 0.318), and EI (β = 0.294) significantly influenced OCB. Indirect effects confirmed the mediating roles of the three variables between JS and OCB. The results highlight the crucial role of JS and WE as mediators in improving positive organizational behaviors among preschool teachers.

Index Terms— Job Satisfaction (JS), Work Engagement (WE), Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), Preschool Teachers (PSTs), Mediating mechanisms, Teacher motivation

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Introduction

Preschool education is an essential aspect of basic education, and it works as the starting point for the entire educational process. Preschool education, also known as pre-kindergarten, is a vital component of a child's total growth. It is a type of education that emphasizes the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development of children aged three to five years old (Bakker, 2022). Employee Job Satisfaction (JS) has been identified as one of an organization's most significant tasks, making understanding it even more critical. JS is defined as a person's view of their experiences with the company as a whole, their position in the organization, company procedures, and their coworkers (Fute et al., 2022).

JS is a pleasurable emotional state caused by evaluating the job in terms of accomplishing or enabling the attainment of job values. According to social exchange theory, when students have a positive job experience, they will increase their work dedication to compensate the company (Gorenak et al., 2020; Shamsuddinova & Nisa, 2021). There are two forms of JS, namely general and particular. General JS refers to a person's overall sense of fulfillment with their job, while particular satisfaction relates to contentment with specific features of the job and various components of the occupational environment (Hu et al., 2024).

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Work Engagement (WE) is important in the context of positive OCB. WE are related to the mood, such as more enthusiastic, energetic, and resolute, which reflects the ideal employee type in today's business environment. It allows individuals to employ important efforts in their work and to be highly concentrated (Ingrams, 2020). WE are satisfying, positive, work related emotional state categorized by strength, commitment, and involvement. Individual instructors have a substantial positive impact on the organizations and people who work at an industrial, personal, and economic level. Teachers' WE have a wide range of consequences, including performance, personal, and socio-emotional implications, and motivational implications (Leung & Lam, 2025).

Children's developmental status is a vital indicator to assess the quality of professional ability building and the success of preschool education improvement for the Kindergarten Teachers (KTs). The activities of the kindergarten language education include numerous types of instructional processes that are done in kindergarten as a subject and language with children (J. Li et al., 2023). According to quality criteria worldwide, young children who participate in high-quality educational activities perform better in terms of receptive vocabulary and language skills. Reading-focused kindergarten education activities help children to enhance their early reading skills (X. Li et al., 2021).

Preschool education as KTs is often more valuable for care and love. As a result, KTs are likely to experience emotional burnout and experience problems with identity formation (Liu et al., 2023). Emotional Intelligence (EI) is important in improving the rural KTs and is associated with the emotional employment methods and self-efficacy. As highly educated emotional employees, the emotional growth and regulation of childhood teachers are only associated with their physical and mental health and job advancement (Pan et al., 2023). Organizational Citizen Behavior (OCB) is defined as a discretionary activity that is not part of the employee's formal status responsibilities. This promotes the success of the organization. It identified five major OCB dimensions: duty, sportsmanship, etiquette, philanthropic, and civil qualities (Polishchuk et al., 2022).

From a theoretical perspective, examining the mediating mechanisms between Job Satisfaction (JS) and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) contributes to the literature on teacher motivation and organizational psychology by integrating multiple mediators—Work Engagement (WE), Psychological Empowerment (PE), and Emotional Intelligence (EI)—into a single explanatory framework (Bakker, 2022; Yuan et al., 2025). Practically, the study provides insights for policymakers and school administrators to design interventions that enhance teacher well-being, strengthen organizational commitment, and reduce turnover in preschool settings.

Previous studies have explored isolated relationships, such as the effect of job satisfaction on work engagement (Zang & Feng, 2023) and the mediating role of professional identity (Xiang et al., 2024). However, limited research has integrated these factors into a unified model for preschool teachers, despite repeated calls in the literature for more comprehensive approaches (Leung & Lam, 2025; Q. Zhang, 2023). This gap constrains our understanding of how JS translates into discretionary behaviors that improve institutional effectiveness.

Accordingly, the present study addresses the following research questions:

- RQ1: How does job satisfaction influence work engagement, psychological empowerment, and emotional intelligence among preschool teachers?
- RQ2: To what extent do these mediating mechanisms explain the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior?
- RQ3: What are the relative strengths of each mediator in predicting OCB?

By explicitly addressing these questions, this research advances theory and practice by providing an integrated model of teacher motivation and organizational behavior within early education contexts.

The organization of the research contains the following subsections: Section 1 describes the introduction, while Section 2 represents the related works of the research. Section 3 defines the development of the hypotheses, and Section 4 contains the methods used for the research. Section 5 reports the results of identifying the key mediating mechanisms, and Section 6 discusses the limitations of the existing research and the merits of the research. Section 7 concludes the research.

Related Works

Table 1 shows a comparison of a number of studies on organizational behavior and teacher motivation. Key findings on the benefits and drawbacks of each research relative to JS, WE, EI, PE, and OCB are included in the table along with references and methodologies used to provide an in-depth overview of their efficacy and difficulties. The research Ren et al. (2022) used CB-SEM on a large public kindergarten teacher sample, providing strong insights regarding pay equity and support but lacking generalizability due to its focus on public institutions. The investigation Vujčić et al. (2022), used correlation and mediation analysis to highlight job satisfaction as a mediator, but its rural, region-specific sample and self-reporting limited its generalizability. The work Wang et al. (2020), established a clear serial mediation model relating work-family conflict to organizational commitment, but it lacked direct correlations between income and turnover and was subject to recollection bias.

Table I
Summary of related studies on job satisfaction, work engagement, and OCB in preschool teachers

Reference	Methods Used	Dataset	Performance Metrics	Advantages	Disadvantages
(Liu et al., 2023)	Descriptive statistics, CB-SEM	*N* = 2029, public KTs	Model fit indices, *β* values	Large sample; robust SEM; focused on pay equity and support	Limited to public kindergartens; cross-sectional design
(Ren et al., 2022)	Correlation & mediation analysis	*N* = 530, rural PE teachers (Hunan)	i-values, i-values	Highlights JS as a mediator	Region-specific sample; self-reported data
(J. Li et al., 2023)	Serial mediation using PROCESS	*N* = 1513, PSTs	*β* coefficients, *p*-values	Clear analysis of WFC/FWC and organizational commitment	No direct income-turnover link; possible recall bias
(X. Li et al., 2021)	SEM analysis via online questionnaire	*N* = 1887, young teachers	Path coefficients, significance levels	Integrates Big Five personality with JS and engagement	Self-report bias excludes the extraversion effect
(S. Wu et al., 2020)	Multiple mediation (SET, SCT, SDT frameworks)	N unspecified, minority group teachers	Significance of mediators	Theoretical richness; dual mediators explored	No direct relationship between SE and JS; sample clarity lacking.
(Fute et al., 2022)	PROCESS for SPSS, correlation analysis	*N* = 2886, COVID-era sample	*β* = 0.203, *r*-values	Large sample; strong correlation evidence	Context-specific (COVID-19); self-reported limitations
(Hu et al., 2024)	SEM with mediation analysis	*N* = 318, Sichuan PSTs	Mediating effect confirmation, path significance	Novel connection between job crafting, identity, and competency	Small sample; geographically narrow
J. Zhang et al. (2024)	Moderated mediation SEM	*N* = 220, Shanghai-based teachers	Model fit, moderation & mediation results	Considers meaningful work and stress factors on turnover	Small sample; limited generalizability
Xiang et al. (2024)	SEM with mediation	*N* = 533, PSTs	*β* values, mediation analysis	Highlights PE's impact on occupational identity	Cross-sectional; not generalizable
(Leung & Lam, 2025)	SEM; online survey	*N* = 336, Hong Kong teachers	Path coefficients, mediation sizes	Dual mediators (commitment and engagement); good model fit	Cross-sectional; specific to Hong Kong

The reviewed studies highlight both the progress and the gaps in our understanding of job satisfaction and OCB among teachers. For instance, Liu et al. (2023) emphasized the role of perceived organizational support and pay equity in shaping job satisfaction, yet their focus on public institutions limits the applicability of findings to private preschool contexts. Similarly, Ren et al. (2022) confirmed that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between gratification delay and engagement, but their rural sample constrains external validity. These findings collectively underscore that context strongly influences the strength of mediating mechanisms, suggesting the need for broader, multi-setting investigations.

Psychological Empowerment (PE) has been increasingly recognized as a mechanism connecting job satisfaction with organizational outcomes. Xiang et al. (2024) found that PE significantly predicts professional identity, which enhances job satisfaction and engagement. In parallel, Hu et al. (2024) demonstrated that professional identity operates as a mediator between job crafting and teacher competency. These insights reveal that empowerment and identity are not only outcomes of satisfaction but also act as dynamic mechanisms through which teachers commit to discretionary behaviors.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has also drawn scholarly attention, particularly in preschool education, where teachers regularly engage in emotional labor. Yuan et al. (2025) identified EI as a predictor of work engagement via emotional regulation strategies. Pan et al. (2023) highlighted how emotional identity strengthens resilience and teacher commitment. Yet, while EI has been linked to individual well-being and engagement, limited studies have explicitly tested its mediating role between job satisfaction and OCB, leaving an important research gap that this study addresses.

Engagement itself remains central to OCB. Bakker (2022) synthesized cross-industry findings and concluded that engaged employees show higher energy, persistence, and citizenship behaviors. Within early education, Vujčić et al. (2022) demonstrated that teacher engagement boosts student socio-emotional outcomes, while J. Zhang et al. (2024) found that engagement reduces turnover by mediating the effect of stressors. Together, these findings confirm the motivational role of engagement but also reveal that the majority of prior studies did not combine engagement with empowerment and emotional intelligence in a single framework.

Another common limitation in prior research lies in methodology. Many studies employed cross-sectional designs (Leung & Lam, 2025; X. Li et al., 2021), which constrain causal inferences. Others relied exclusively on self-reports (Gulzar, 2025; Q. Wu et al., 2023), increasing the likelihood of common method bias. Region-specific sampling (Hu et al., 2024; Ren et al., 2022) further restricts generalizability. Consequently, scholars have repeatedly called for longitudinal, multi-regional, and multi-method studies to validate these relationships.

Building on these insights, the present study responds to gaps highlighted by recent literature. It advances the field by (1) testing multiple

mediators—WE, PE, and EI—in one integrative framework; (2) focusing specifically on preschool teachers, a group often neglected in prior research despite their pivotal role in child development; and (3) employing a robust SEM approach that simultaneously examines direct and indirect effects. In doing so, this research not only extends prior work but also offers practical insights for improving teacher engagement, empowerment, and emotional competencies within preschool education.

Hypotheses development

This research examines the relationships among JS, WE, and OCB in PSTs, with a focus on identifying key mediating mechanisms. The research proposes five hypotheses to examine how JS influences OCB in PSTs, both directly and indirectly. The mediating roles of WE, PE, and EI are explored to understand the mechanisms through which JS enhances positive organizational behaviors. Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework of the selected hypotheses.

When PSTs are happy with their professions, teachers are inclined to be enthusiastic, engaged, and dedicated to their work. JS generates emotional and psychological energy, which promotes WE. This association shows that increasing the working circumstances directly increases teacher engagement.

H1: JS has a significant positive effect on the WE among the preschool teachers

Teachers who are satisfied with their roles are more likely to feel secure, autonomous, and impactful. JS promotes a sense of meaning and control over one's work environment. The PE increases their ability to take initiative and contribute beyond their formal responsibilities.

H2: JS has a significant positive effect on PE among the preschool teachers

Teachers with high JS generally improve their emotional management and interpersonal skills. Positive job experiences improve EI by increasing emotional awareness and empathy. This leads to stronger relationships with students, colleagues, and parents, which are critical in early education.

H3: JS has a significant positive effect on EI among the preschool teachers

WE is a crucial mechanism that connects JS to OCB. Satisfied teachers become more involved, which motivates them to move beyond their formal responsibilities. Therefore, engagement converts satisfaction into proactive and beneficial organizational behaviors.

H4: WE significantly mediates the relationship between the JS and OCB

PE mediates the pathway between the JS and OCB by increasing a teacher's confidence in their influence and competence. Teachers who are satisfied with their jobs feel empowered, making them more inclined to engage in voluntary, positive activity. Empowerment makes teachers feel that their extra efforts are valuable.

H5: PE significantly mediates the relationship between the JS and OCB

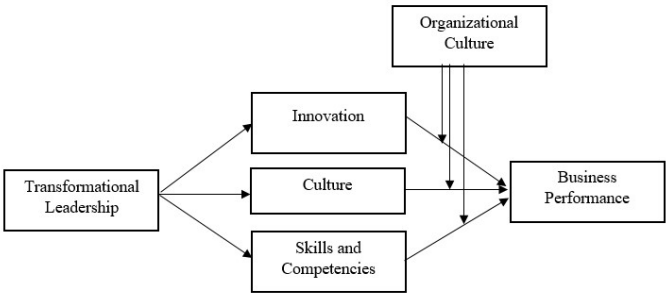


Fig. 1 *Measurement model*

Methodology

This research examines the relationships among JS, WE, and OCB in PSTs, with a focus on identifying key mediating mechanisms. This section summarizes the research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection process, and the statistical analysis that was used to test the hypothesized model. This section ensures that the research is replicable and that its validity and reliability were evaluated.

Research design

The research used a cross-sectional survey and a quantitative approach to look into the links between JS, WE, PE, EI, and OCB in PSTs. This design was suited for assessing numerous variables simultaneously and examining both direct and indirect effects using statistical modeling. The study adopted a cross-sectional design with data collected between January and April 2024. A structured questionnaire was administered both online

and offline to ensure accessibility for participants in different regions. Random sampling was used to reduce bias and increase representativeness across gender, age, and institution type.

Participants and data collection

A total of 408 preschool teachers were provided with a standardized questionnaire in both written and electronic form, depending on the participants' availability and preferences. Participants were selected by random sampling to ensure representation from a variety of demographic backgrounds, including age, teaching experience, and school type. The process was conducted in complete accordance with anonymity and confidentiality. Table 2 represents the demographic features of preschool teacher respondents. Figure 2 represents the graphical representation of the demographic features.

The data collection was conducted over a four-month period from January to April 2024, ensuring that seasonal variations in workload and institutional activities did not influence responses. The final sample of 408 preschool teachers was drawn from both public (58.3%) and private (41.7%) institutions across multiple urban and semi-urban regions. This diversity enhances the representativeness of the findings by capturing demographic and institutional variations. Participants ranged in age from 20 to over 50 years, with teaching experience spanning less than 5 years to over 15 years, thereby providing insights from both early-career and experienced educators.

Table II
Demographic features of preschool teacher respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	82	20.1%
	Female	326	79.9%
Age Group (Years)	20–29	108	26.5%
	30–39	186	45.6%
	40–49	76	18.6%
	50 and above	38	9.3%
Teaching Experience	Less than 5 years	94	23.0%
	5–10 years	156	38.2%
	11–15 years	102	25.0%
	More than 15 years	56	13.7%
Educational Qualification	Diploma in Preschool Education	124	30.4%
	Bachelor's Degree	204	50.0%
	Master's Degree or above	80	19.6%
Monthly Income (INR)	Below ₹15,000	98	24.0%
	₹15,000–₹30,000	174	42.6%
	₹30,001–₹45,000	94	23.0%
	Above ₹45,000	42	10.3%
Job Position	Assistant Teacher	158	38.7%
	Lead/Head Teacher	186	45.6%
	Administrative Role	64	15.7%
Type of Institution	Public Preschool	238	58.3%
	Private Preschool	170	41.7%
Employment Type	Permanent	234	57.4%
	Contractual	174	42.6%

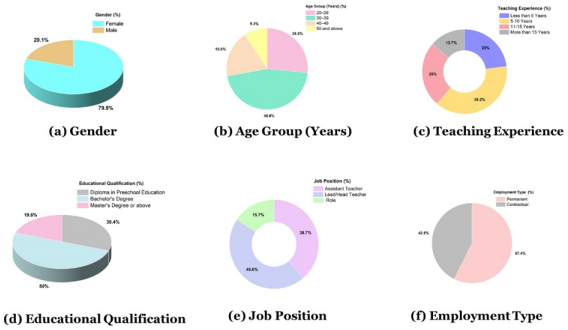


Fig. 2 *Graphical representation of the demographic features*

The demographic profile of the 408 preschool teachers revealed that 20.1% were male (*n*=82) and 79.9% were female (n=326). The majority were 30-39 years old (45.6%), followed by 20-29 years (26.5%), 40-49 years (18.6%), and 50 and older (9.3%). In the teaching experience, 38.2% had 5-10 years, 25.0% had 11-15 years, 23.0% had less than 5 years, and 13.7% had more than 15 years. The majority (50%) had a Bachelor's degree, with 30.4% holding a diploma and 19.6% holding a Master's. Lead teachers comprised the largest group (45.6%), with 58.3% working in public preschools and 57.4% employed permanently.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire used standardized and validated scales to assess the following fundamental variables: JS, WE, PE, EI, and OCB. All questions were measured by utilizing a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). The instrument has a strong internal consistency, and its content validity was confirmed by expert evaluations.

Data analysis

The information gathered was examined using SPSS. The research employed Descriptive statistics, Reliability analysis, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), and Pearson correlation analysis for identifying key mediating mechanisms. Descriptive statistics were utilized to summarize each construction, standard deviations, obliqueness, and kurtosis. The reliability analysis using the alpha of Cronbach (α) assessed the internal stability of measurement parameters. The Pearson Correlation Analysis identified the direction and strength of the association between all the research variables. The CFA validated the measurement model, confirming the construction's credibility and validity. SEM tested both direct and indirect relations between JS, intermediaries, and OCB. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was selected as the primary analytical technique due to its ability to test both direct and indirect relationships simultaneously, making it suitable for evaluating complex mediation models (Hu et al., 2024). The use of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) further ensured construct validity, while Pearson correlation analysis provided preliminary evidence of variable associations. These methods are widely employed in educational psychology and organizational behavior studies (Leung & Lam, 2025), justifying their application in this research.

Result

This research examines the relationships among JS, WE, and OCB in PSTs, with a focus on identifying the key mediating mechanisms. This section shows the research's findings based on descriptive statistics, reliability, correlation, and SEM. It assesses the assessment instruments' validity and consistency and investigates the hypothesized relationships between JS, WE, PE, EI, and OCB. The results provide empirical support for the proposed mediation model.

Analyzing preschool teachers' responses using descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics characterize and define the fundamental characteristics of a dataset, such as mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis. It contributes to an understanding of preschool instructors' general reaction patterns in terms of JS, WE, PE, EI, and OCB. Table 3 shows descriptive data for the research's five primary variables.

Table III
Demographic characteristics of preschool teacher participants

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Skewness	Kurtosis
JS	4.12	0.57	-0.62	0.44
WE	4.05	0.61	-0.47	0.26
PE	3.89	0.66	-0.31	-0.18
EI	4.01	0.59	-0.58	0.39
OCB	4.18	0.54	-0.69	0.61

OCB had the maximum mean (*M*=4.18,SD=0.54) with a substantially negative skew (-0.69) and a slightly peaked distribution (kurtosis = 0.61), indicating a high level of reported citizenship behaviour. JS also had a high mean of 4.12 (SD = 0.57), which was slightly negatively skewed (-0.62), demonstrating that the majority of teachers were highly satisfied. WE (*M* = 4.05), EI (*M* = 4.01), and PE (*M* = 3.89) all had negative skewness and roughly normal kurtosis values, indicating generally positive but variable responses among participants.

Assessment of reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha for measuring teachers' behaviors

Reliability Analysis assesses the consistency and stability of measurement equipment, usually utilizing the α to determine internal consistency. It assures that the scales used to assess JS, WE, PE, EI, and OCB are reliable and accurately reflect the desired dimensions. Table 4 shows the internal consistency reliability of each variable.

Table IV
Reliability scores for each variable based on the α values

Variables	Number of Items	α
JS	3	0.872
WE	3	0.889
PE	3	0.854
EI	3	0.861
OCB	3	0.893
Overall Instrument Reliability	15 (Total)	0.902

The reliability analysis revealed a high internal consistency across all the variables, with α values ranging from 0.854 to 0.893 for individual scales. JS (α = 0.872), WE (α = 0.889), PE (α = 0.854), EI (α = 0.861), and OCB (α = 0.893) all exceeded acceptable levels. The instrument demonstrated great dependability (α = 0.902).

Evaluation of Pearson correlation analysis for measuring teachers' variable relationships

Pearson Correlation Analysis measures the strength and direction of a linear association between the two continuous variables. It helps in determining the degree of correlation between JS, WE, PE, EI, and OCB before performing SEM analysis. It determines whether the variables are significantly connected and appropriate for path modeling. Table 5 represents the Pearson correlation matrix for the fundamental variables. Figure 3 shows the visual representation of Pearson correlation analysis.

Table V
Pearson correlation matrix among variables

Variable	JS	WE	PE	EI	OCB
JS	1	-	-	-	-
WE	.721**	1	-	-	-
PE	.683**	.644**	1	-	-
EI	.659**	.616**	.587**	1	-
OCB	.672**	.701**	.629**	.611**	1

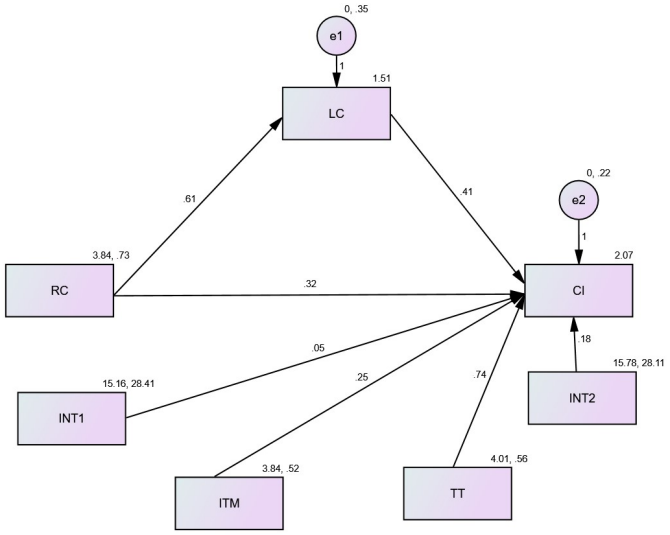


Fig. 3 *Visual representation of Pearson correlation analysis*

JS has a strong and positive correlation with WE (*r* =.721**), PE (*r* =.683**), EI (*r* =.659**), and OCB (*r* =.672**). The strongest correlation was discovered between WE and OCB (*r* =.701**), indicating a close relationship. All correlations are significant at the *p* <.01 level, confirming the predicted positive connections between variables.

Evaluation of variable validity using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for teachers

CFA is a statistical method for verifying a collection of observable variables' factor structure and determining if they faithfully capture the underlying latent variables. It ensures that items load strongly on their intended variables to validate the validity of the measurement model. Measures like Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and factor loadings are utilized to measure the discriminant and convergent validity. The variable validity of the five latent variables is verified by the CFA results, which are displayed in Table 6.

Table VI
CFA Results for measurement model

Variables	Items	FactorLoading	AVE	CR
JS	JS1	0.82	0.66	0.93
	JS2	0.86		
	JS3	0.78		
WE	WE1	0.88	0.70	0.94
	WE2	0.91		
	WE3	0.85		
PE	PE1	0.81	0.62	0.91
	PE2	0.76		
	PE3	0.79		
EI	EI1	0.87	0.64	0.92
	EI2	0.79		
	EI3	0.76		
OCB	OCB1	0.89	0.68	0.94
	OCB2	0.82		
	OCB3	0.85		

Strong item reliability is indicated by all factor loadings over 0.76; OCB ranges from 0.82 to 0.89, while JS ranges from 0.78 to 0.86. Convergent validity and high internal consistency of the measurement model are demonstrated by the AVE values, which range from 0.62 (PE) to 0.70 (WE), and the CR values, which range from 0.91 to 0.94, surpassing the suggested criterion of 0.50.

Analyzing teacher behaviour relationships using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

SEM is an advanced multivariate statistical method that analyzes complicated connections between latent and observable variables in a single model. SEM examines the direct and indirect relationships among OCB, mediators (WE, PE, and EI), and JS. It validates the entire theoretical framework by integrating measurement and structural models. This method verifies whether hypothesized paths and mediations are statistically supported by actual data. Table 7 presents the SEM data for all proposed hypotheses. Figure 4 depicts an SEM path diagram illustrating relationships among key variables.

Table VII
SEM results with hypotheses testing

Hypothesis	Path	Effect Type	*β*	*p*-value	Result
H1	JS → WE	Direct	0.621	< .001	Supported
H2	JS → PE	Direct	0.538	< .001	Supported
H3	JS → EI	Direct	0.492	< .001	Supported
H4	JS → WE → OCB	Indirect	0.424	< .001	Supported
H5	JS → PE → OCB	Indirect	0.171	< .001	Supported

JS has a substantial direct effect on the WE (*β* = 0.621), PE (*β* = 0.538), EI (*β* = 0.492), and OCB (*β* = 0.171). The indirect effects of WE (*β* = 0.424) and PE (*β* = 0.171) are substantial, indicating their mediating influence. All hypotheses have *p*-values <.001 or <.01, providing strong statistical evidence for the proposed model.

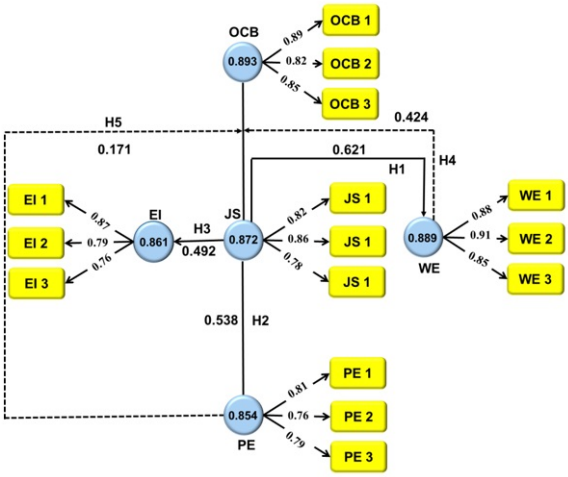


Fig. 4 *SEM path diagram illustrating relationships among key variables*

These results align with Social Exchange Theory (SET), which posits that employees reciprocate positive job experiences with beneficial behaviors. In this context, preschool teachers who report higher job satisfaction are more engaged, empowered, and emotionally intelligent, thereby exhibiting greater OCB. The strong mediating effect of work engagement supports prior findings (Bakker, 2022) and extends them by demonstrating how engagement translates satisfaction into discretionary behaviors. Similarly, the significant role of psychological empowerment resonates with research linking autonomy and influence to positive organizational outcomes (Masih et al., 2025; Xiang et al., 2024). Emotional intelligence also emerged as a meaningful mediator, underscoring the importance of socio-emotional skills in educational contexts. Together, these findings integrate multiple theoretical perspectives and confirm the robustness of the conceptual framework.

Discussion

Several existing approaches have significant drawbacks. For example, the research (Q. Wu et al., 2023) employed a cross-sectional design, which constrains the capacity to draw conclusions about causality. The S. Wu et al. (2020) and Zang and Feng (2023) used region-specific or small sample datasets, which limited the generalizability of their findings. The investigation J. Zhang et al. (2024) utilized self-reported data, which increases the possibility of bias and diminishes objectivity. In contrast, the research used a well-validated model and included several mediators, and it also has a strong SEM analysis. The findings revealed that JS has a considerable influence on WE, PE, and EI, which have a positive impact on OCB. The mediating roles were statistically supported, which strengthened the model's validity. This integrated method provides complete knowledge of the elements that motivate positive teacher conduct. The research has practical implications for increasing teacher retention and institutional effectiveness in early education settings.

Implications for practice and policy

The findings have important implications for preschool education. Administrators should focus on strengthening job satisfaction through supportive leadership, fair compensation, and professional development opportunities, as these factors enhance engagement, empowerment, and emotional intelligence. Programs aimed at boosting teachers' socio-emotional skills may further improve OCB, leading to stronger collaboration and student outcomes.

Comparative analysis with recent studies further validates these implications. For example, J. Zhang et al. (2024), similarly highlighted the role of engagement in reducing turnover intentions, while Yuan et al. (2025), emphasized emotional intelligence as a predictor of work engagement. By integrating these insights, the current study underscores the multidimensional pathways through which job satisfaction translates into positive behaviors.

Conclusion

The research examines the relationships among JS, WE, and OCB in the PSTs, with a focus on recognizing the key mediating mechanisms. Data was collected from 408 preschool teachers using a structured questionnaire, showing high content validity and excellent internal stability. Descriptive figures revealed the high average score for all constructions, with OCB and JS performing the highest rankings. Pearson correlation analysis indicated significant and positive relations between all variables, with the highest correlation between us and the OCB. CFA confirmed strong

factor loading, AVE value between 0.62 and 0.70, and the overall reliability value from 0.91 to 0.94. SEM revealed that JS had substantial direct effects on WE (β=0.621), PE (β=0.538), and EI (β=0.492). Indirect effects through mediators were also important: WE (β=0.424) and PE (β=0.171) confirm all seven hypotheses. A major limitation of the research was its dependence on self-reported cross-sectional data, which could have introduced the general method bias. Future research should utilize a longitudinal or mixed-method design to improve causal inference.

Limitations and future research directions

While this study provides valuable insights into the mediating role of Work Engagement, Psychological Empowerment, and Emotional Intelligence in the relationship between Job Satisfaction and OCB among preschool teachers, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the research employed a cross-sectional design and relied on self-reported measures, which may introduce bias and limit causal inference. Second, the sample was drawn primarily from selected regions, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings to all preschool contexts. Future studies could adopt longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to establish causal pathways and explore how these relationships evolve over time. Expanding the sample to include diverse cultural and geographical settings would further strengthen external validity. Additionally, future research could integrate contextual moderators such as institutional support, teacher training opportunities, and leadership styles to provide a more nuanced understanding of the factors shaping positive organizational behaviors in preschool education.

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