



**THE DEVELOPMENT MODEL OF KINDERGARTEN  
TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY  
IN HUBEI, CHINA**

**BY**

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### **Abstract**

This study aimed to 1) understand kindergarten teachers' life stories about their professional identity; 2) identify the influencing factors of kindergarten teachers' professional identity; 3) examine the relationship between the influencing factors and kindergarten teachers' professional identity; and 4) explore a development model for kindergarten teachers' professional identity. The quantitative and qualitative methods were used to study the kindergarten teachers' professional identity. First, the interview data of 9 kindergarten teachers were analyzed for the influencing factors of kindergarten teachers' professional identity by using grounded theory. The findings revealed that there were four influencing factors in kindergarten teachers' professional identity, namely self-image, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and social support. These findings were used to design a questionnaire that was distributed to 396 kindergarten teachers to investigate the relationship between the influencing factors and kindergarten teachers' professional identity. The SEM model revealed that self-image significantly and positively affected professional identity ( $CR=6.042$ ,  $P<0.001$ ); self-efficacy significantly and positively affected professional identity ( $CR=5.438$ ,  $P<0.001$ ); job satisfaction significantly and positively affected professional identity ( $CR=4.533$ ,  $P<0.001$ ); social support significantly and positively affected professional identity ( $CR=6.027$ ,  $P<0.001$ ). Finally, a focus group of 4 experts was organized to confirm the emerging development model. The results of this research can be used to develop strategies to improve kindergarten teachers' professional identity to enrich existing kindergarten teachers' professional identity as the guidelines for all kindergartens in similar contexts.

(Total 202 pages)

**Keywords:** Kindergarten teachers, Professional identity, Influencing factors,  
 The grounded theory, SEM

Student's Signature .....Dissertation Advisor's Signature .....

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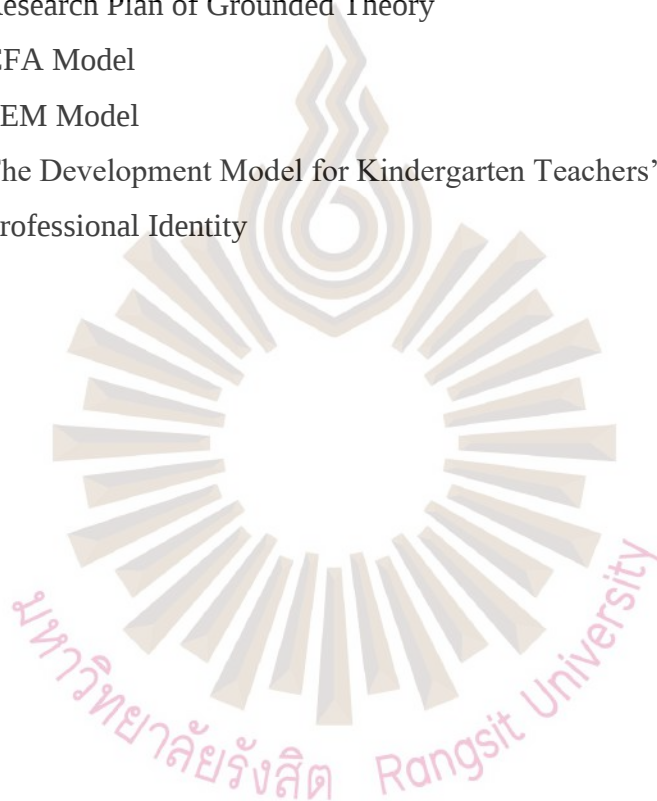
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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

In this chapter, the background of the research is described. A statement of the problem is made and the purposes of the research are identified. From the problem statement and purposes, three research questions were generated. In addition, definitions of terms used in the research are specified and the major limitations of the research are discussed.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Early childhood education (ECE) is a critical component in national development, as it sets the foundation for children's future learning and development (Neuman et al., 2021). The New Zealand government issues the Early Learning Action Plan 2019-2029, the plan emphasizes the importance of early childhood education as a foundation for lifelong learning and development, and it seeks to create a more cohesive and effective ECE system that benefits all children in New Zealand. Similarly, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care (2022) by the Australian Government Department of Education is designed to provide a robust and consistent framework that supports the delivery of high-quality early childhood education and care, ensuring positive outcomes for children's learning and development. Moreover, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), enacted in 2015 and summarized by the U.S. Department of Education in 2021, reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and replaces the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). ESSA recognizes the critical role of early childhood education in laying the foundation for lifelong learning and success. By providing states and local agencies with the flexibility to design and implement effective early learning programs, ESSA aims to ensure that all children enter school ready to learn and succeed. Furthermore, China's education modernization plan towards 2035 mentions that by 2035 universal access to quality

early childhood education. In summary, the consensus is clear: early childhood education is foundational to shaping successful educational trajectories and contributing significantly to a nation's overall development and progress. Better early childhood education will be possible as a result, and future standards will rise (Minyi, 2021).

Currently, in China, the focus on early childhood education is shifting from simply increasing the quantity of resources to enhancing their quality. High-quality educational resources are becoming increasingly scarce (Liu, 2021). To address the educational needs of the country, there is a growing demand for high-quality kindergarten teachers (White & Smith, 2023). However, statistics from the Ministry of Education of China reveal that by 2020, only 57.73% of kindergarten principals and teachers held junior college degrees, 27.72% had bachelor's degrees, and a mere 0.30% possessed master's degrees. Additionally, the attrition rate among kindergarten teachers is alarmingly high, reaching 60% to 70%, with an average attrition rate of 30% to 40%. Liu (2021) highlights that kindergarten teachers currently face significant challenges, including high turnover rates, poor job persistence, weak commitment to the teaching profession, and burnout.

Previous studies indicate a negative correlation between professional identity and teacher burnout, as well as with turnover rates (Kubicek et al., 2017; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Qadach et al., 2020). This suggests that higher levels of professional identity contribute to greater longevity in the teaching profession. Caprara et al. (2003) assert that teachers with strong professional identities experience a greater sense of achievement, satisfaction, and happiness from their work. Conversely, those with low professional identity are more likely to encounter negative work situations or leave the profession altogether (Ma, Zhou, & Liu, 2021). Furthermore, professional identity significantly impacts teachers' work attitudes (Beijaard et al., 2004), professional development (Yazan, 2019), and work commitment (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Teachers with a higher level of professional identity are more engaged in their work, actively seek to learn, and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to perform their tasks (Liu, 2021). Enhancing teachers' professional identity is therefore a pressing issue that needs to be addressed by today's Education Department.

To strengthen teachers' professional identity, we first need to be clear about what factors affect teachers' professional identity. Qadach et al. (2020) highlight the relevance of professional identity to burnout among teachers, emphasizing the concern of educational policymakers and administrators. Göncz (2017) reviews the role of teacher personality in educational psychology, while Vizek Vidović and Domović (2019) examine the development of teachers' beliefs in initial teacher education. Cheng (2021) explores the implications of EFL/ESL teachers' emotions on their professional identity development, highlighting factors such as pedagogical beliefs, emotional experiences, environmental factors, and perceptions. Meanwhile, understanding the impacts of teacher immunity and emotion regulation on professional identity, autonomy, and work motivation is crucial for enhancing teacher well-being in the educational landscape (Namaziandost et al., 2024). Overall, exploring the influencing factors on teachers' professional identity is essential for promoting teachers' professional identity development and well-being in the field of education.

Therefore, this study employed a mixed-methods design which used both the qualitative and quantitative methods to understand kindergarten teachers' life stories about their professional identity, to identify the influencing factors of kindergarten teachers' professional identity, and to examine the relationship between influencing factors and kindergarten teachers' professional identity, in order to explore the development model for kindergarten teachers' professional identity.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

First, early childhood education plays a crucial role in preparing young children for success in school and beyond (Heckman, 2011). Researches indicate that the quality of kindergarten teachers plays a critical role in shaping children's outcomes. High-quality kindergarten teachers are found to significantly enhance children's self-esteem and foster positive attitudes toward lifelong learning. These findings underscore the importance of investing in the professional development and support of kindergarten teachers to ensure they can provide the best possible start for young learners (Liu, 2021; Yazan, 2019). However, statistics from the Ministry of Education of China show that

by 2020, 57.73% of kindergarten principals and teachers nationwide have junior college degrees, 27.72% have bachelor's degrees and only 0.30% have master's degrees. How to let higher-quality teachers enter the early childhood industry is an urgent problem to be studied and solved by today's Education Department.

Second, a qualified kindergarten teacher must meet three requirements, according to Kappeler et al. (2019): "ability to teach," "ability to teach effectively," and "willingness to teach." According to Connor et al. (2005), although many factors affect students' academic success, teachers' ability to instruct effectively is the most crucial. Teachers' professional identities are found to relate with teaching quality (Veisson & Kabaday, 2018), teacher pedagogical content knowledge (Atai & Khazaei, 2014), pedagogical choices (Beijaard et al. 2004; Pennington & Richards, 2016) and classroom practices (Eslamdoost, King, & Tajeddin, 2020; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Widodo, Fang, & Elyas, 2020). Farrell (2016) contends that a teacher must create and live out a professional identity to carry out the difficult responsibilities of good teaching and produce successful learning. Veisson and Kabaday (2018) state that a teacher's ability to instruct is correlated with how professionally identified they are. In light of this, it is essential to comprehend instructors' identities to better comprehend the nature of teaching and learning as well as any intervening factors (Ko & Kim, 2021).

Third, however, Klavir and Kozminski (2012) highlight that the professional identity of teacher educators is often misunderstood by educational leaders, society at large, and even the teacher educators themselves. Previous studies demonstrate a negative correlation between professional identity and teacher burnout, as well as turnover rates (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Qadach et al., 2020). According to Atmaca et al. (2020), emotions significantly influence teachers' professional identity, with emotional burnout being a prominent factor leading to teacher dropout. In China, the attrition rate of preschool teachers is alarmingly high, ranging from 60% to 70%, with an average rate of 30% to 40%. Addressing the high attrition rate of kindergarten teachers is therefore an urgent issue. Moore and Hofman (1988) observe that lower levels of job dissatisfaction and work stress are associated with higher levels of professional identity among teachers. Furthermore, Tarrasch (2019) finds that enhancing kindergarten

teachers' professional identity can reduce turnover and promote stability within the workforce.

Finally, teachers' professional identity is a complex and multifaceted concept that is influenced by various factors. Zhang (2017) explores how non-native English teachers construct their professional identity, specifically focusing on the influence of nonnatives as a social factor. Shoulders (2018) aims to describe the professional identities of agriculture teachers in Arkansas and examine how various factors influence these identities. The findings reveal that there are four influencing factors, namely: work environment, professional development, community and student relationships, and personal background. Gholamshahi et al. (2021) develop and validate an instrument that measures the identities imposed on EFL teachers by various external factors, such as institutional policies, societal expectations, and cultural norms. These studies highlight the importance of understanding and supporting the development of teachers' professional identities and recognizing the diverse influences and contexts that shape them.

In general, kindergarten teachers' professional identity often has a direct impact on their willingness to enter and remain in the early childhood education industry as well as their long-term stability. Therefore, the best solution to the aforementioned issues is to strengthen kindergarten teachers' professional identity. This is indeed what this thesis intended to do.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

1.3.1 To understand kindergarten teachers' life stories about their professional identity

1.3.2 To identify the influencing factors of kindergarten teachers' professional identity

1.3.3 To examine the relationship between the influencing factors and kindergarten teachers' professional identity

1.3.4 To explore a development model for kindergarten teachers' professional identity

## **1.4 Research Questions**

1.4.1 What are the kindergarten teachers' life stories about their professional identity?

1.4.2 What are the influencing factors of kindergarten teachers' professional identity?

1.4.3 What is the relationship between influencing factors and kindergarten teachers' professional identity?

1.4.4 What should be the development model for kindergarten teachers' professional identity?

## **1.5 Research Scope**

### **1.5.1 Research Site**

This study was carried out in Hubei Province, which has 13 prefecture-level cities, 3 directly administered county-level cities, and 1 directly administered forest area, a total of 17 regions. According to the population ranking of cities in Hubei Province, Wuhan, the biggest city has the largest population, Jingmen, an average city has an average population, and Qianjiang, the smallest city with who has the smallest population, were selected as the study sites. The population of the Shenlongjia forest area ranks last, but due to its geographical specificity, it was not included in the

comparison. The samples and cases in this study were all from public and private kindergartens in three cities.

### **1.5.2 Research Population**

In this study, 33239 kindergarten teachers from three cities were the population of the study.

### **1.5.3 Research Sample Groups**

1) In this study, narrative research was adopted to gather stories about the life of 9 kindergarten teachers by using purposive sampling.

2) Based on the formula of Yamane (1967), 396 samples emerged through the Stratified Sampling method for the questionnaire survey.

3) In this study, 4 experts were selected for a focus group to critically analyze the proposed model. Experts in the field of early childhood education were selected from Yunnan Technology and Business University, Hubei Normal University and Krirk University.

### **1.5.4 Research Instruments**

This study used a mixed-methods approach, which combined qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques. The first instrument was a life story interview and the second instrument was the kindergarten teachers' professional identity questionnaire. The third instrument was the focus group.

### 1.5.5 Conceptual framework

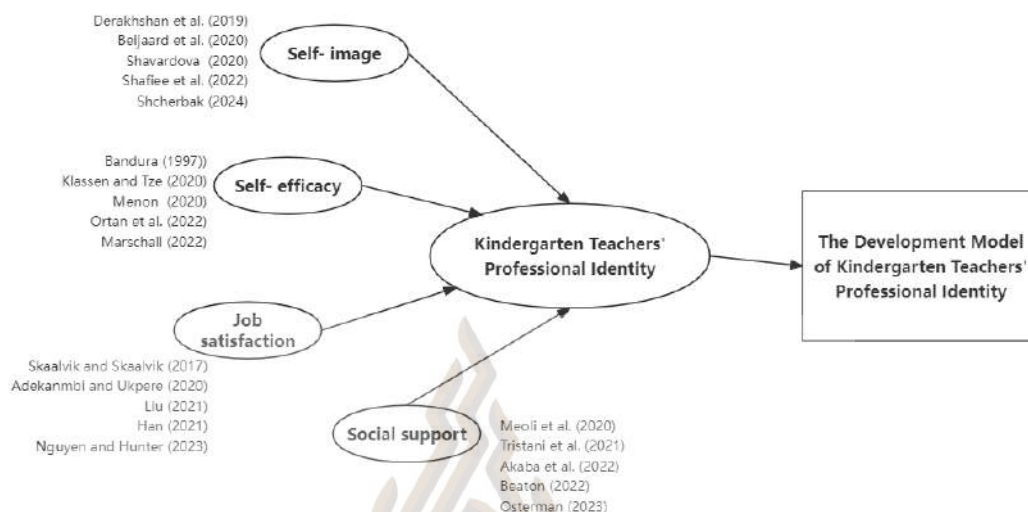


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

### Theoretical Contributions:

1) The research findings that emerged from the study could be used to enrich existing kindergarten teachers' professional identity as the guidelines for all kindergartens in similar contexts. This study will function as a jigsaw piece that could fill up the gaps in the theory of kindergarten teachers' professional identity in China. Most literature has been found to report about the contexts of the West and little literature has been found on the Chinese kindergartens. This issue is significant because Chinese kindergartens as teachers' professional identities have different cultures and views about how to face the future and how to learn in special contexts.

2) It can be assumed that factors for kindergarten teachers vary depending on the contexts the kindergartens are in. Therefore, in kindergartens in China, kindergarten teachers' professional identity may be different from those in the West. The research findings can benefit the field by adding to the already existing literature review.

3) The research results can be used for the benefit of the kindergartens to guide and train kindergarten teachers. The kindergarten teachers' professional identity will be continuously improved.

#### Practical Benefits:

1) For the kindergartens in this study, the research findings can help them to develop strategies to enhance kindergarten teachers' professional identity and apply the research results to guide and train kindergarten teachers.

2) For kindergarten teachers, the research findings can help them understand the importance of enhancing teachers' professional identity, which not only contributes to the sustainable development of kindergartens but also facilitates the professional identity development of teachers themselves.

3) For other kindergartens, the research findings can help them understand the factors needed to enhance teachers' professional identity and can check kindergarten teachers' professional identity.

4) For society, enhancing kindergarten teachers' professional identity can guarantee stability and enable them to have healthy and orderly development. At the same time, kindergarten teachers with high quality and high stability are also conducive to ensuring social stability.

5) For other authors, the research findings can provide a reference for future authors who also study kindergarten teachers' professional identity.

### 1.7 Limitation of the Study

The study was carried out with kindergarten teachers in only 3 cities of Hubei Province. Thus, generalizations to kindergarten teachers in other provinces should not be made. Future research should expand the bigger sample size.

## 1.8 Definition of Terms

Keywords in this study are defined as follows:

**Kindergarten teachers:** Kindergarten teachers are professionals who carry out the responsibility of childcare and education for children. They must possess special professional qualities, good professional ethics and attitude, and professional educational knowledge and skills.

**Teachers' Professional Identity:** In this study, teachers' professional identity encompasses a framework for self-comprehension within their professional contexts, blending personal and professional aspects, and harmonizing their lives. This identity is shaped by actions, experiences, perspectives, and beliefs, influencing attitudes, behaviors, and reactions, while also impacting instructional approaches and overall performance.

**Influencing factor:** Analyzing kindergarten teachers' life stories with grounded theory to get four influencing factors. Influencing factors are used to determine which factors affect a goal, and the extent to which these factors influence and contribute to the goal. In this study, there are four influencing factors, namely: self-image, self-efficacy, job satisfaction and social support.

**Hubei:** It refers to a first-level administrative region the capital of which is Wuhan, located in central China of the Republic of China. It has 13 prefecture-level cities, 3 directly administered county-level cities, and 1 directly administered forest area, a total 17 regions. According to the 7th National Census Bulletin, the province has a permanent resident population of 57.75 million, ranking 10th in China. Through the implementation of the Early Childhood Education Promotion Action Plan, Hubei Province has achieved a gross enrolment rate of over 90%, an inclusive kindergarten coverage rate of over 85% and public kindergarten coverage rate of over 50%.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

In this chapter, a review is made of selected literature pertinent to the investigation. It provides the theoretical background to issues related to teachers' professional identity. The purpose of the literature review is to show the core definitions and previous research on teachers' professional identity. Meanwhile, it shows the importance of studying teachers' professional identity.

#### **2.1 Identity**

This section includes three parts, definition of identity, definition of professional identity and teachers' professional identity.

##### **2.1.1 Definition of Identity**

Identity is a complex and multifaceted construct that has been explored from various perspectives across multiple disciplines including philosophy, psychology, psychoanalysis, social psychology, and sociology (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Richardson & Watt, 2018). While there is no single unified definition of identity (Leigh, 2019), it is often described as dynamic and multifaceted (Steinbeiss, 2021), with different theoretical lenses offering varying perspectives (Smith & Sparkes, 2008).

Philosophically, identity involves individuals constantly questioning and understanding "who I am," "where I am," and "what I am useful for," leading to a gradual recognition of one's own identity and value (Foncha, 2014). Through this philosophical exploration of identity, individuals engage in a continual process of self-discovery, self-definition, and self-realization. It is a journey marked by introspection, inquiry, and existential reflection, as individuals strive to understand their place in the

world and the significance of their existence. Ultimately, this journey leads to a gradual recognition of one's identity and value, enriching the human experience and shaping individual trajectories of growth and fulfillment (Kegan, 1982).

From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, identity formation involves stages of attitude change including compliance, identification, and internalization, as individuals adopt ideas, attitudes, and behaviors similar to those around them to build satisfying relationships (Kelman, 1958). These stages reflect the complex interplay between individual psychology and social context, as individuals navigate the process of constructing their identity within the framework of interpersonal relationships and societal influences. Through this process, individuals forge connections with others, establish a sense of belonging, and develop a coherent sense of self that is integral to their psychological well-being and interpersonal functioning (Breakwell, 2021).

Psychologically, identity is understood as how a person constructs their relationship with the world across time and space, and their understanding of future possibilities (Norton, 2000). One fundamental aspect of psychological identity is the continuous process of self-construction and self-definition, wherein individuals integrate diverse experiences, beliefs, values, and social roles into their sense of self. This process involves reflection on personal history, cultural influences, and interpersonal relationships, shaping one's identity over time. Through this ongoing construction, individuals develop a coherent narrative of who they are, where they come from, and where they are headed (Maryna et al., 2024).

In social psychology, the concept of social identity underscores the intricate interplay between individual status and the broader social structure, as highlighted by Beijaard et al. (2004). Social identity theory posits that individuals derive a significant portion of their sense of self from their membership in various social groups, such as ethnicity, nationality, religion, occupation, or organizational affiliations. These group memberships serve as sources of social identity, influencing how individuals perceive themselves and others within the larger social context (Ibrar, 2024).

From a sociological perspective, identity is profoundly influenced by the roles individuals assume within society, as elucidated by the pioneering work of Mead. Mead introduced the concept of "role" to sociology, which refers to the norms, expectations, and behavior patterns associated with specific social statuses or positions. These roles provide individuals with a framework for understanding their place in society and guide their interactions with others. According to Heled and Davidovitch (2019), professional identity is derived from one's occupation and is shaped by the social, cultural, and institutional contexts in which it operates. Liu, Sammons, and Menter (2023) emphasize how individuals' perceptions of their roles and functions within a profession significantly impact their sense of identity. The professional environment, including organizational norms, professional standards, and societal expectations, contributes to the formation and maintenance of professional identities.

Overall, the study of identity encompasses a wide range of perspectives and methodologies from various disciplines, reflecting its complexity and multifaceted nature.

### **2.1.2 Definition of Professional Identity**

Professional identity is a multifaceted concept that has been explored from various theoretical perspectives including psychological, social-psychological, and sociological (Pillen, 2013), and as a dynamic and ongoing process (Beijaard et al., 2004).

**Psychological Perspective:** Professional identity is seen as one's self-concept within their profession, encompassing attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences (Johnson & Maclean, 2023; Tomlinson & Jackson, 2021). It is the internal motivator for professional advancement and involves the gradual development of self-awareness in the professional field (Heled & Davidovitch, 2019). Niemi, a psychologist, believes that professional identity is a professional's self-concept, which is established as people become familiar with and identify the nature, substance, social worth, and personal significance of professional activities through the process of sustained participation. It is the psychological basis for people to do their work well and achieve

organizational goals. It is also the gradual development of self-awareness in the professional field.

**Social-Psychological Perspective:** professional identity serves as a cornerstone for individuals, offering them stability, confidence, and pride in their chosen occupation, as noted by Crocetti et al. (2023). This sense of professional identity fosters a positive attitude towards one's job and engenders a strong commitment to it. Individuals who have a well-developed professional identity tend to internalize their career as significant and fulfilling, which in turn leads to greater satisfaction and integration into their work environment. Moreover, the profession's social identity plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' perceptions of their own professional identity. As highlighted by Nixin (1996), the positive affirmation and recognition of a particular profession's value by the public contribute to the reinforcement and validation of professional identity. When a profession is esteemed and valued by society, individuals within that profession are more likely to derive a sense of pride and commitment from their association with it.

**Sociological Perspective:** Professional identity development is understood through role identity (Bransford et al., 2005), assessing one's position within the profession considering its significance and compatibility with other roles (Moore & Hofman, 1998). Professional identity functions as a facet of social identity, as posited by Allen (2023). It utilizes the specific working conditions inherent to a profession to exemplify the defining characteristics of its occupational community. This encompasses shared attitudes, values, knowledge, beliefs, and skills among members of the professional group. Moreover, individuals within the profession fulfill various roles strongly influenced by the surrounding communities and institutions, as indicated by Kogan (2000) and Mael and Ashforth (1992). Wenger (1998) underscores that individuals continually evolve, shaped by their aspirations which permeate every aspect of their lives. Given the significant role of profession and work in one's life, identifying oneself through the lens of a professional role holds considerable importance.

**Dynamic and Ongoing Process:** Professional identity is perceived as dynamic and evolving (Chang-Kredl & Kingsley, 2014; Côté & Levine, 2014; Şenel, 2021), shaped

by interactions with social and cultural environments (Rogers & Scott, 2008). It involves constant interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences (Dillabough, 1999), integrating information, beliefs, attitudes, and values. Professional development is seen as a lifelong journey, addressing both current and future aspirations (Beijaard et al., 2000). According to Beijaard et al. (2004), professional identity is a dynamic and ongoing process of experiencing interpretation and reinterpretation, implying that professional development is perpetual. They highlight that developing a professional identity entails addressing not only the current state of identity but also aspirations for future growth. In a word, this perspective underscores the dynamic nature of professional identity, emphasizing that its formation, development, and shaping are continual processes.

Overall, professional identity provides individuals with a sense of belonging and purpose within their profession, serving as a secure base from which to understand and engage in their work. It encompasses respect for one's occupation, a positive assessment of work, and the ability to fulfill both material and spiritual needs.

### **2.1.3 Definition of Teachers' professional identity**

The significance of teachers' professional identity within the educational realm has led to a growing focus on it as a research subject by various scholars (Barkhuizen, 2016; Johnson & Maclean, 2023). Despite extensive discourse in international studies, a definitive definition of teachers' professional identity remains elusive. Here are some definitions of teachers' professional identity that appeared in previous literature.

Teachers' professional identity serves as a framework for individuals to comprehend themselves within their professional contexts, as outlined by Coldron and Smith (1999) and MacLure (1993). This understanding encompasses how teachers perceive themselves as professionals (Eteläpelto & Vähäsantanen, 2006), blending personal and professional aspects of their teacher identity (Pennington & Richards, 2016), and harmonizing their personal and professional lives (Burns & Bell, 2011). Beijaard et al. (2004) emphasize that a teacher's professional identity involves self-

awareness within teaching-related relationships and settings, manifesting through practical professional engagements, a sense of belonging, and educational encounters. Liu and Wang (2022) highlight the association between professional identity and interactions within the professional sphere. Additionally, Sachs (2005) suggests that teachers develop their perceptions of "how to be," "how to act," and "how to understand" their roles and societal positions within the framework of their professional identity. This identity offers individuals a structure for comprehending their experiences and actions, providing them with meaning and context.

While there is no singular definition, certain characteristics are commonly attributed to teachers' professional identity in recent studies (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013).

First, individuals develop their professional identity through their actions. Beijaard et al. (2004) highlight that individuals shape their professional identity through their actions, particularly in the context of teaching. Korthagen (2004) suggests that teachers can refine their professional identity by introspectively questioning themselves about their roles and aspirations as educators. By addressing such inquiries, teachers gain insights into their professional identity, learning about their capabilities and limitations during their education, their role as role models, and their future teaching approaches. Additionally, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) propose that teachers use their professional identity to establish their value system, which helps them define their roles, objectives, and values as educators. This process enables teachers to articulate their beliefs regarding teaching, learning, and their self-perception as teachers.

Second, teachers' professional identity is shaped by their experiences, perspectives, and beliefs. Ibarra (1999) posits that teachers' professional identity is molded by their experiences, perspectives, and beliefs, which in turn shape their attitudes, behaviors, and reactions, as supported by Bukor (2015) and Schutz et al. (2020). Moreover, teachers' professional identity plays a pivotal role in how they perceive their students' behavior and progress (Caihong, 2011), influences their instructional approaches (Ivanovaa & Skara-Mincne, 2016), and has a profound impact on their overall performance and professional development (Yazan, 2019). İlğan et al. (2015) discover that teachers with

a robust professional identity tend to allocate more time to teaching responsibilities, thereby enhancing the quality of their teaching. Understanding the formation of teachers' identities is essential as it informs their pedagogical choices and classroom methodologies (Eslamdoost et al., 2020; Widodo et al., 2020).

Third, teachers' professional identity is characterized by its dynamic nature. Rodgers and Scott (2008) assert that teachers' professional identity is shaped by various contexts, evolving through relationships and meaning-making processes, reflecting its ongoing and dynamic nature. Contrary to being stable or fixed, teachers' professional identity undergoes continuous development and remains fluid throughout their personal and professional growth (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; De Fina et al., 2006; Kegan, 1982). Urzúa and Vásquez (2008) suggest that teachers' professional identity evolves through social interactions, prompting reflection on past experiences and their implications for present and future practices. This process contributes to a set of perceptions shaped by teachers' instructional methods. Previous research highlights a multitude of factors influencing teachers' professional identities, including their traits, learning backgrounds, past experiences, and beliefs, as well as their professional environments, colleagues, expertise, abilities, and educational philosophies (Cross, 2020; Halim Masnan et al., 2021).

In summary, teachers' professional identity encompasses a framework for self-comprehension within their professional contexts, blending personal and professional aspects, and harmonizing their lives. This identity is shaped by actions, experiences, perspectives, and beliefs, influencing attitudes, behaviors, and reactions, while also impacting instructional approaches and overall performance.

## **2.2 The Importance of Teachers' Professional Identity**

The importance of teachers' professional identity stems from its profound impact on various aspects of the teaching profession, educational outcomes, and the overall well-being of educators (Beijaard, 2000; Brott & Myers, 1999; Esteve, 2009). Here are several reasons why teachers' professional identity is crucial:

1) Teachers' professional identity influences teachers' intentions to stay or leave the profession, impacting retention rates (Gaziel, 1995; Kubicek et al., 2017; Qadach et al., 2020).

2) Teachers' professional identity explains teachers' responses to educational reforms and changes, shaping their adaptability and effectiveness in implementing new strategies (Akmal & Miller, 2003; Danielowich, 2012; Deniz, 2022; Vähäsantanen & Eteläpelto, 2009).

3) Teachers' professional identity affects the perception of educational theories (Ghafar Samar et al., 2011; Morita, 2004), teaching quality (Veisson & Kabaday, 2018), teacher pedagogical content knowledge (Atai & Khazaee, 2014), pedagogical choices (Beijaard et al. 2004; Pennington & Richards, 2016), and classroom practices (Eslamdoost et al., 2020; Widodo et al., 2020).

4) Teachers' professional identity greatly influences teachers' performance, efficacy, professional development, and ability to cope with teaching challenges (Beijaard, 2000; Morita, 2004; Sercu, 2006).

5) Teachers' professional identity impacts work values, capabilities, professional knowledge, personal and professional growth, success, and creativity (Berger & Lê Van, 2000; Donato, 2017; Fahd Aljuhaish et al., 2020; Gazzola & Smith, 2007).

6) Teachers' professional identity affects the sense of unity among colleagues, accountability, ethical conduct, and pride in the teaching profession, fostering a positive work environment (Brott & Myers, 1999; Gale & Austin, 2003; Kelchtermans, 2009).

7) Teachers' professional identity affects teachers' efforts at work and confidence in their profession (LaFleur, 2007; Qadeer et al., 2018; Skaalvik, E. & Skaalvik, S., 2010), pride in oneself and security in one's career (Nelson & Jackson,

2003), ethics and rules on the job, the boundaries of the teachers on the job (Lasky, 2005), awareness of services provided, and general sense of satisfaction with the profession (Remley & Herlihy, 2005).

8) Teachers' professional identity affects teachers' sense of well-being, work behaviors, and effectiveness, contributing to overall job performance (Donato, 2017; Farell, 2015; Kumpulainen et al., 2023).

## 2.3 The Influencing Factors of Teachers' Professional Identity

These influencing factors can be categorized into three main groups: individual factors, school factors, and social factors (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 The Influencing Factors of Teachers' Professional Identity

| Main group         | Factors                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Individual factors | Gender, age, marital status, teaching years, working and life experience, educational experiences, educational background, self-image, self-efficacy, job emotions, etc. |
| School factors     | Interpersonal relationships, work atmosphere, workload, wage, leadership and management, promotion opportunities, etc.                                                   |
| Social factors     | National policy, social status, media influence, social environment, significant others, etc.                                                                            |

Source: Researcher

### 2.3.1 Individual factors

1) Gender: Gender differences have been shown to have a determining impact on various aspects related to professional identity (Allard, 2004; Chetcuti, 2009; McCall, 2020). Dillabough (1999) critiques the concepts of 'teacher professionalism' and 'professional identity' from feminist perspectives, highlighting the role of gender politics in shaping these constructs. Skelton et al. (2009) reveal that gender matters

differently to boys, girls, and teachers in the primary classroom, indicating the importance of gender in educational experiences. Ghanizadeh and Ostad (2016) examine the components of teachers' professional identity and how they relate to teaching experience, gender, and educational level. McCall (2020) explores how traditional gender roles and stereotypes within the engineering profession impact women's professional identity and career satisfaction. Women often face challenges related to workplace culture, lack of mentorship, and work-life balance, which contribute to their decisions to leave the field.

2) Age: Age is a significant factor that affects teachers' professional identity, as highlighted in the literature. Lasky (2005) discusses how the political and social context, along with early teacher development, shape teachers' sense of identity and purpose. This suggests that age and the experiences accumulated over time play a crucial role in how teachers perceive themselves professionally. Similarly, Cardelle-Elawar et al. (2010) emphasize that teacher identity is a complex construct influenced by teachers' experiences of success and frustration, age, and cultural context. The study also suggests that self-regulated inquiry can help teachers assess their professional growth from a motivational perspective. Furthermore, Assaf (2008) explores the professional identity of a reading teacher who struggled with testing pressures, indicating that external factors such as high-stakes testing can impact a teacher's sense of professional identity. This highlights how age and experience may influence how teachers respond to external pressures and challenges in their profession. Moreover, Van De Mierop and Clifton (2012) discuss how age can impact professional identity, with younger and older professionals experiencing different challenges and opportunities. Age-related stereotypes and expectations can influence career progression, professional relationships, and self-perception in the workplace.

3) Marital status: The influence of marital status on teachers' professional identity has been a topic of interest in educational research. Gmelch et al. (1986) find significant differences in faculty stress levels based on marital status, among other personal characteristics. Thoits (1992) further emphasizes that the salience or importance of different identities may vary systematically by gender and marital status.

Chang et al. (2017) also note that teachers of different marital statuses showed differences in school organizational climate constructs and turnover intentions. These findings suggest that marital status may play a role in shaping teachers' professional experiences and identities. Furthermore, Bogler and Somech (2004) find that aspects of empowerment, such as professional growth and self-efficacy, were significant predictors of organizational commitment and professional commitment among teachers. This highlights the importance of factors beyond marital status in shaping teachers' professional identities.

4) Teaching years: The influence of teaching years on teachers' professional identity is a complex and evolving process that involves the negotiation of personal and professional spaces (Alsup, 2005). Beijgaard et al. (2000) conduct a study comparing teachers' perceptions of their professional identity at the beginning of their careers with their current perceptions. They found that 31% of teachers stated that their current perception had not changed compared to their initial perception, while 69% reported a change in their perception. This indicates a significant shift in how teachers view their professional identity over time ( $\text{Lambda} = 0.004$ ). Initially, many teachers identified themselves primarily as subject experts. However, as their careers progressed, most teachers experienced a transition from seeing themselves solely as subject experts to viewing themselves as part of balanced professional groups. It's worth noting that very few teachers made the transition to identifying themselves primarily as teaching experts.

5) Working and life Experience: Past learning and work experiences play a crucial role in shaping teachers' practices and professional identity. Teachers' stories, influenced by their past and present landscapes, contribute to their unique professional identity (Clandinin & Huber, 2005; Dalby, 2017; Hsieh, 2016). For example, Ahmad et al. (2017) conducted research into the determinants shaping the professional identity of 41 Pakistani EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers employed in Saudi Arabia. Their study revealed that teachers' experiences teaching English abroad, their career aspirations, interactions with fellow EFL educators, and their non-native English speaker status, significantly influenced their professional identity. Similarly, Frausto

Hernandez (2019) suggests that the participants' previous immigrant experiences play a significant role in how their English teaching practice is perceived.

6) Educational Experiences: Teachers' experiences within the educational system, including their schooling, higher education, and professional development activities, significantly impact their professional identity. Positive experiences, such as effective mentorship, engaging coursework, and growth opportunities, can strengthen teachers' sense of professional identity and commitment to their profession (Goodson & Cole, 1994; Hong, 2010).

7) Education Background: The type and quality of teacher education programs also play a crucial role in shaping professional identity. Teacher preparation programs provide opportunities for individuals to acquire pedagogical knowledge, instructional strategies, and classroom management skills, all of which contribute to the formation of professional identity. Additionally, exposure to educational theories, research, and best practices during teacher training programs can shape teachers' beliefs and approaches to teaching (Fahd Aljuhaish et al., 2020).

8) Job emotions: Emotions have been identified as playing a significant role in the development of student teachers' professional identity, influencing social learning processes (Timošćuk et al., 2012). Negative emotions can have detrimental effects on professional identity and can even lead to burnout and dropout from the profession. Conversely, building a positive relationship between oneself and the profession can foster the development of a strong professional identity (Gale & Austin, 2003; Hong, 2010; Kubicek et al., 2017; Wei, 2008).

9) Self-image: The influence of self-image on teachers' professional identity has received significant attention in educational research. Kelchtermans (2009) argues that teachers' self-image, shaped by their personal and professional experiences, significantly impacts their teaching practice and professional identity. Reflection on these experiences helps teachers understand their professional selves better, manage vulnerabilities, and develop a coherent professional identity (Sutherland, 2010).

Similarly, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) contend that teachers' self-image is constructed through ongoing dialogues between personal and professional experiences. This approach highlights the complex and dynamic nature of identity formation, where self-image plays a crucial role in navigating professional challenges and growth.

Moreover, research by Motallebzadeh et al. (2018) and Derakhshan et al. (2019) delves into the connection between EFL teachers' professional identity and self-esteem, highlighting that positive self-esteem predicts a strong professional identity. Shavardova (2020) further emphasizes the significance of teachers' self-image as a vital aspect of self-realization and societal recognition, indicating its pivotal role in shaping teachers' professional identities.

Beijaard et al. (2020) explore how teachers' self-image contributes to their perceptions of professional identity, emphasizing the importance of personal knowledge and experiences in shaping how teachers see themselves professionally.

In addition, Qadeer et al. (2018) highlight the importance of the relationship between beginning teachers and head teachers in shaping the professional self-image of new educators. Supportive and constructive interactions with head teachers are crucial for building beginning teachers' confidence, competence, and overall professional identity. The findings suggest that schools should prioritize effective mentorship and professional development programs to facilitate the positive growth of beginning teachers in their early career stages.

Finally, Shafiee et al. (2022) highlight the significance of teachers' technology-related self-images and their impact on professional identity. The findings suggest that positive self-images and evolving roles as facilitators and innovators are crucial for the successful integration of CALL technologies in language teaching. Addressing challenges and providing continuous professional development can enhance teachers' confidence and competence, leading to more effective use of technology in education.

In summary, this body of research collectively underscores the importance of self-image in fostering a strong and meaningful professional identity among teachers. Through reflective practices, mentorship, and the support of personal and contextual factors, teachers can develop and sustain a positive self-image, essential for their professional growth and satisfaction.

10) Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy plays a crucial role in shaping teachers' professional identity. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001), along with Ortan et al. (2021), emphasize that high self-efficacy is associated with greater persistence, enthusiasm, and resilience. These qualities are essential for developing a strong professional identity. Their studies also discuss the impact of self-efficacy on classroom management, instructional strategies, and student outcomes.

Marschall (2022) points out that self-efficacy is a teacher's belief in his or her ability to effectively teach and cope with classroom challenges. The study looks at how Katie's self-efficacy develops over time and how it is influenced by her professional identity.

Menon (2020) defines self-efficacy as the belief in one's capabilities to teach science effectively. The sources of self-efficacy explored include mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and emotional states.

Derakhshan et al. (2019) examine the roles of self-efficacy, professional identity, and autonomy in predicting English language teachers' success. They find that self-efficacy significantly contributes to teachers' confidence and effectiveness in their roles. High self-efficacy levels are associated with greater professional commitment and better teaching outcomes, underscoring the importance of fostering self-efficacy in professional development programs.

Zee and Koomen (2016) find that teachers with high self-efficacy are more effective in classroom management, instructional strategies, and fostering student engagement. These positive classroom practices contribute to a strong professional identity and overall job satisfaction.

Bukor (2015) takes a holistic perspective on teacher identity, emphasizing the interconnectedness of personal and professional experiences. The research highlights how self-efficacy beliefs are integral to this process, influencing how teachers perceive their abilities and navigate their professional roles. Transformative experiences, reflective practices, and continuous professional development are essential in shaping a cohesive and confident professional identity.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) investigate the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and burnout. Their findings suggest that low self-efficacy is linked to higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, negatively affecting professional identity. Conversely, teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to experience job satisfaction and a robust professional identity. This highlights the need for interventions that boost self-efficacy to prevent burnout.

Canrinus et al. (2012) define self-efficacy as teachers' belief in their ability to effectively perform teaching tasks. It is considered to be a key factor affecting other aspects of professional identity.

Fisherman and Weiss (2011) explore the positive relationship between self-efficacy and teachers' confidence in their skills and abilities. Their findings indicate that teachers with higher self-efficacy are more likely to make effective work-related decisions, manage classrooms better, and implement innovative teaching strategies. The study underscores the importance of self-efficacy in enhancing overall effectiveness.

Bandura's seminal work on self-efficacy (1997), although not specifically focused on teachers, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how self-efficacy beliefs influence behavior and identity. Bandura argues that self-efficacy affects individuals' choices, effort, persistence, and resilience in the face of challenges. Applying this framework to teaching, high self-efficacy can empower teachers to adopt effective teaching practices and develop a robust professional identity.

In conclusion, self-efficacy is a critical factor in shaping teachers' professional identity, influencing their resilience, job satisfaction, and effectiveness in the classroom. Promoting self-efficacy through professional development and supportive interventions is essential for fostering strong, confident, and effective teachers. The research collectively underscores the importance of self-efficacy in developing and sustaining a positive professional identity, highlighting the need for continuous support and development to enhance teachers' self-efficacy and overall effectiveness.

### 2.3.2 School factors

1) Interpersonal Relationship: Interpersonal relationships play a pivotal role in shaping teachers' professional identity. The interactions teachers have with their colleagues, administrators, students, and the wider school community significantly influence their sense of self as professionals, their job satisfaction, and their commitment to the profession.

#### Collegial Relationships:

The relationships teachers form with their colleagues are fundamental to their professional identity. According to Kelchtermans (2005), supportive collegial relationships provide emotional support, reduce feelings of isolation, and foster a collaborative work environment. Teachers who engage in regular, meaningful interactions with their peers are more likely to experience a sense of belonging and professional fulfillment. These relationships also facilitate the sharing of best practices, collective problem-solving, and continuous professional development (Ghafar Samar et al., 2011; Hargreaves, 2000).

Ghafar Samar et al. (2011) emphasize the importance of interpersonal relationships within institutions, including those with coworkers, managers, and staff, as crucial components of institutional identity. These relationships contribute significantly to professional socialization, with peer interactions playing a pivotal role. Through these interactions, teachers can develop a strong sense of professional identity and a supportive network that enhances their professional growth and satisfaction.

#### Relationships with Administrators:

The relationship between teachers and school administrators is another critical factor. Administrators who provide clear communication, professional support, and recognition contribute to a positive professional identity among teachers. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) find that trust in leadership is linked to higher levels of teacher efficacy and job satisfaction. When teachers feel supported and valued by their administrators, they are more likely to develop a strong professional identity and exhibit greater commitment to their roles (Balyer, 2012).

#### Student-Teacher Relationships:

Interactions with students also significantly impact teachers' professional identity. Positive relationships with students can enhance teachers' sense of purpose and motivation. Hamre and Pianta (2006) emphasize that teachers who build strong, respectful, and supportive relationships with their students tend to feel more competent and effective in their roles. These relationships can provide intrinsic rewards that reinforce teachers' commitment to the profession and their desire to make a positive difference in their students' lives.

2) Working atmospheres: The overall organizational climate of a school significantly impacts teachers' professional identity. A positive climate characterized by supportive leadership, clear communication, and opportunities for professional development fosters a sense of belonging and professional confidence among teachers. Cameron and Grant (2017) highlight that an encouraging organizational climate enables teachers to thrive and maintain a strong professional identity. Conversely, a negative climate can result in professional dissatisfaction and a weakened sense of identity. Unhappy and unproductive teaching-learning atmospheres can detrimentally affect teachers' professional identity. Studies by Lee and Yin (2011), and van Veen and Slegers (2006) emphasize the negative impact of such environments on teachers' sense of professional identity. Hostile or unproductive school climates can diminish teachers' morale and sense of efficacy, leading to challenges in maintaining a strong professional identity.

3) Workload: Excessive workload, unrealistic job demands, and lack of resources can indeed contribute significantly to stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction among teachers, ultimately leading to higher turnover rates within the profession. Research conducted by Skaalvik, E. and Skaalvik, S. (2010) sheds light on the profound impact of workload on teacher well-being and turnover intentions. Their study revealed that teachers who experienced high levels of workload and job demands were more likely to report elevated levels of stress and burnout, consequently increasing their likelihood of contemplating leaving the teaching profession.

#### Impact of Excessive Workload and Job Demands:

Excessive workloads and unrealistic job demands place immense pressure on teachers, affecting their mental and emotional well-being. Teachers are often faced with numerous responsibilities, including lesson planning, grading, administrative tasks, student assessments, and extracurricular activities. When these demands become overwhelming and unsustainable, it can lead to feelings of stress, exhaustion, and dissatisfaction (Hakanen et al., 2006; Skaalvik, E. & Skaalvik, S., 2017a).

#### Consequences of Stress and Burnout:

The cumulative effect of prolonged stress and burnout can have detrimental effects on teachers' physical health, mental health, and job performance. Maslach and Leiter (2008) outline the three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Teachers experiencing burnout may feel emotionally drained, disconnected from their work and students, and may struggle to meet professional expectations, leading to decreased job satisfaction and efficacy.

#### Turnover Intentions:

As stress and burnout intensify, teachers may develop turnover intentions, contemplating leaving the profession altogether. The decision to leave teaching is often influenced by a combination of factors, including job dissatisfaction, lack of support, and perceived inadequacy of resources (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Skaalvik, E. &

Skaalvik, S., 2017a). High turnover rates not only impact individual teachers but also contribute to instability within schools and educational systems.

#### Addressing Workload and Job Demands:

Educational institutions and policymakers need to address the root causes of excessive workload and unrealistic job demands. Providing adequate resources, and professional support, and implementing strategies for workload management can help alleviate stress and burnout among teachers (Hakanen et al., 2006; Heffernan et al., 2022). Additionally, fostering a positive work environment, promoting work-life balance, and recognizing teachers' contributions can contribute to greater job satisfaction and retention within the profession.

4) Wage: The level of remuneration in the teaching profession is indeed a significant factor that influences teachers' professional identity. Research by Adekanmbi and Ukpere (2021), Hakanen et al. (2021), and Han (2021) highlight that the low status of teaching as a profession, coupled with inadequate compensation, contributes to teacher shortages in various contexts. Liu (2021) further demonstrates that higher salary levels are correlated with a stronger professional identity among preschool teachers.

#### Impact of Low Remuneration:

Relatively low income levels and the perceived undervaluation of teaching as a profession can deter individuals from pursuing careers in education and can contribute to attrition among teachers. Teachers may feel unappreciated or undervalued, leading to job dissatisfaction and a weakened sense of professional identity (Ingersoll, 2001).

#### Attraction and Retention of Educators:

Improving wages and overall compensation in the teaching profession is crucial for attracting and retaining qualified educators. Higher salaries can serve as a motivating factor for individuals considering a career in education, especially in areas facing teacher shortages (Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2021; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Liu 2021). Adequate compensation not only acknowledges the value of teachers'

contributions but also plays a vital role in maintaining their commitment to the profession.

#### Professional Identity and Job Satisfaction:

Adequate remuneration contributes to a positive professional identity among teachers. When teachers feel adequately compensated for their work, they are more likely to perceive their profession positively and take pride in their roles. This, in turn, enhances job satisfaction, promotes a sense of efficacy, and fosters a stronger connection to the teaching profession (Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2021; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Liu 2021).

#### Development of the Education Sector:

Investing in competitive wages and comprehensive compensation packages is essential for the overall development of the education sector. Qualified and motivated teachers are instrumental in delivering quality education and driving positive outcomes for students. Therefore, addressing salary disparities and ensuring fair compensation for educators are crucial steps in enhancing the quality of education and promoting a robust professional identity within the field of education.

Leadership and management: The critical role of effective leadership and supportive management practices in cultivating a positive work environment and reducing turnover among educators cannot be overstated. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiration, motivation, clear direction, and support, plays a pivotal role in fostering teacher satisfaction and commitment (Leithwood et al., 2008). This style of leadership focuses on empowering and developing individuals, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among teachers.

Moreover, collective teacher efficacy and positive leader relationships contribute significantly to reducing turnover intentions by ensuring that educators feel valued, supported, and part of a collaborative and growth-oriented culture (Goddard et al., 2004). When teachers believe in their collective ability to positively impact student

learning and when they have positive relationships with their leaders, they are more likely to remain committed to their roles and the institution.

By implementing these leadership practices and fostering a positive organizational culture, educational institutions can create an environment where teachers thrive. Harris (2002) highlights the importance of a positive school culture in enhancing teacher well-being and job satisfaction, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for both educators and students alike. A supportive work environment not only reduces turnover but also promotes professional growth, collaboration, and innovation among educators.

**Promotion Opportunity:** Promotion opportunities play a significant role in shaping teachers' job identity and overall job satisfaction. The prospect of career advancement, professional growth, and upward mobility within an organization directly impacts how teachers perceive their roles, their commitment to the profession, and their overall job satisfaction.

#### **Career Progression and Professional Growth:**

Promotion opportunities offer teachers the chance to advance in their careers, take on new responsibilities, and acquire additional skills and knowledge. This sense of career progression and professional growth is essential for maintaining job satisfaction and a positive job identity. Teachers who see a clear path to advancement are more likely to feel motivated, engaged, and committed to their roles (Werbińska, 2017).

#### **Recognition and Validation:**

Promotions serve as a form of recognition and validation of teachers' hard work, dedication, and contributions to the organization. Being promoted can boost teachers' morale, self-esteem, and sense of accomplishment, leading to increased job satisfaction and a stronger job identity (Knowles, 2015).

### Increased Responsibility and Impact:

Promotion opportunities often come with increased responsibilities, leadership roles, and opportunities to make a broader impact within the educational system. Teachers who are promoted to leadership positions, such as department heads, curriculum coordinators, or instructional leaders, have the opportunity to influence decision-making, shape policies, and contribute to educational reforms. This increased level of responsibility and influence contributes to a more robust job identity and job satisfaction (Werbińska, 2017).

### Retention and Commitment:

Providing clear pathways for promotion and career advancement can enhance teacher retention rates and foster greater commitment to the profession and the organization. Teachers who see a future within the organization are more likely to stay long-term, contribute positively to the school community, and maintain a strong sense of job identity (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

### Professional Development and Learning Opportunities:

Promotions often come with access to specialized training, professional development opportunities, and networking events. These resources not only support teachers in their new roles but also contribute to ongoing learning, skill development, and career satisfaction (Leithwood et al., 2008).

In conclusion, promotion opportunities are a vital component of teachers' job identity and job satisfaction. They provide avenues for career progression, recognition, increased responsibility, and professional growth, all of which contribute to a positive sense of job identity and commitment to the teaching profession.

Through the above content, we can summarize job satisfaction including interpersonal relationships, working atmosphere, workload, salary, leadership and management, and promotion opportunities. From the above, we can conclude that job satisfaction includes interpersonal relationships, working atmosphere, workload, salary, leadership management, and promotion opportunities.



Figure 2.1 Job Satisfaction

Source: Researcher

Job satisfaction significantly influences teachers' professional identity, shaping how they perceive their roles, their commitment to the profession, and their overall well-being. Several key effects of job satisfaction on teachers' professional identity can be observed:

Job satisfaction contributes to a sense of purpose and fulfillment among teachers. When teachers feel satisfied with their work, they are more likely to view teaching as a meaningful and rewarding profession. This positive perception enhances their professional identity, reinforcing their dedication to their roles and their impact on students' lives (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Satisfied teachers demonstrate higher levels of commitment and engagement in their work. They are more likely to be motivated, enthusiastic, and dedicated to providing quality education to their students. This commitment is reflected in their professional identity, as they see themselves as invested and integral members of the education community (Skaalvik, E. & Skaalvik, S., 2017a).

Job satisfaction is closely linked to job retention and stability within the teaching profession. Satisfied teachers are less likely to experience turnover intentions or seek employment opportunities outside of education. This continuity fosters a strong and consistent professional identity, as teachers establish themselves within their schools and communities over time (Nguyen & Hunter, 2023).

Job satisfaction contributes to teachers' confidence and self-efficacy in their professional abilities. Satisfied teachers are more likely to believe in their capacity to positively impact student learning, navigate challenges, and adapt to changing educational contexts. This sense of confidence enhances their professional identity, as they see themselves as capable and competent educators (Demir, 2020).

Satisfied teachers are more likely to engage in continuous professional development and seek growth opportunities. They are receptive to learning new strategies, exploring innovative practices, and enhancing their skills and knowledge. This ongoing development contributes to a dynamic and evolving professional identity, as teachers adapt to new challenges and embrace lifelong learning (Leithwood et al., 2008).

In summary, job satisfaction plays a crucial role in shaping teachers' professional identity by fostering a sense of purpose, commitment, confidence, and continuous growth within the teaching profession.

### **2.3.2 Social factors**

1) National Policy: Institutional pedagogical orientations and national educational policies have a substantial impact on teachers' professional identities (Akaba et al., 2022; Zen, 2018). These policies often necessitate educational adjustments and reforms, which can lead to a reevaluation of professional identity among teachers, presenting implementation challenges (Vähäsantanen & Eteläpelto, 2009). This highlights the systemic influences that shape teachers' professional

identities, stressing the need to consider institutional and policy contexts in understanding identity formation in education.

Within the field of education, studies by Torres-Rocha (2017) and Zen (2018) delve into these elements' impact on teachers' professional identities and development. Torres-Rocha (2017) focuses on the influence of the National Bilingual Programme on high school EFL teachers' identity, highlighting how language policy shapes teacher identity. Zen (2018) explores how international education policies, along with social, political, and historical factors, influence teacher identity and professional growth in Indonesia.

Additionally, national policies significantly impact preschool teachers' professional identity, as evidenced by Akaba et al.'s study (2022) on policy directives during a universal Pre-Kindergarten expansion in New York City and its effects on teachers' identities. These studies collectively underscore the intricate relationship between institutional frameworks, policy mandates, and teacher identity formation within the educational landscape.

2) Social status: Social status has emerged as a critical factor influencing job selection, job satisfaction, and retention in various studies. Elsbach and Bhattacharya (2001) explore how social status and power dynamics impact employees' reactions to empowerment messages in the workplace. They find that individuals with higher social status and power tend to respond more positively to empowerment initiatives, influencing their professional identity by reinforcing their sense of agency and autonomy.

Research by Anderson et al. (2019), Hannah and Kahn (1989) and Meoli et al. (2020) provide valuable insights into the impact of social recognition within a job on employees' attitudes and behaviors.

Anderson et al. (2019) contribute to this understanding by exploring the link between social recognition at work and job satisfaction. Their findings highlight

that employees who receive adequate social recognition and appreciation for their contributions tend to experience higher levels of job satisfaction, engagement, and commitment to their roles.

Hannah and Kahn (1989) explore how socioeconomic status (SES) and gender influence the occupational aspirations and choices of high school seniors. The study finds that students from higher SES backgrounds have a broader range of career aspirations and aim for higher-status occupations, while lower SES students have more limited career choices. Additionally, gender significantly impacts career choices, with males and females tending to aspire to traditionally gendered roles. The interaction between SES and gender further shapes these career aspirations, suggesting that interventions to promote equitable career opportunities should address both SES and gender disparities.

Meoli et al. (2020) underscore the role of social status in shaping organizational culture, teamwork dynamics, and employee morale. These studies emphasize the need for organizations to prioritize creating inclusive environments that promote social recognition, respect, and opportunities for career advancement.

In conclusion, the literature on social status and its impact on job selection, job satisfaction, and retention highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing employees' contributions within organizations. By fostering a culture of social recognition and inclusion, organizations can enhance employee well-being, productivity, and long-term commitment.

3) Significant Others: Social support plays a pivotal role in shaping teachers' professional identity by providing emotional, informational, and practical assistance from significant others, including family, friends, colleagues, administrators, and mentors. Researches underscore the importance of social support in fostering a positive and resilient professional identity among teachers.

### The Role of Family and Friends:

Dörnyei and Clément (2001) highlight the motivational influence of significant others such as family, parents, and friends. They emphasize that these relationships provide crucial emotional support, which significantly impacts teachers' motivation and professional identity.

Van Engen et al. (2021) focus on the pivotal role of family in shaping an individual's professional identity. They find that parental relationships significantly influence career growth and identity formation. Similarly, Levine and Hoffner (2006) note that discussions about career goals with friends can shape perceptions of different occupations, highlighting peer support's role in identity negotiation.

Monrouxe (2016) discusses how parents' experiences influence their children's identities and professional trajectories, reinforcing the importance of family support in professional identity formation.

### Emotional and Informational Support from Colleagues and Administrators:

Nelson and Brice (2008) emphasize the importance of emotional and informational support in sustaining teacher commitment and professional identity. Teachers who receive encouragement and constructive feedback from colleagues and administrators are more likely to feel valued and motivated. This support helps teachers navigate challenges and reinforces their sense of purpose and professional identity.

Malecki and Demaray (2003) explore how different types of social support—emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental—affect students' adjustment in school. The study investigates which types of support are most beneficial for students' psychological and academic well-being. The findings suggest that each type of support plays a distinct role in helping students manage challenges and improve their adjustment, with varying impacts depending on individual needs and contexts. This underscores the importance of providing tailored support to enhance students' overall adjustment and success in school.

Mérida-López et al. (2020) investigate how social support, engagement, and emotional intelligence influence teachers' intentions to leave the teaching profession. The study finds that strong social support from colleagues and supervisors, high levels of engagement, and high emotional intelligence are associated with lower intentions to quit teaching. These factors help mitigate the stress and challenges associated with the profession, thus reducing the likelihood of teachers contemplating resignation.

#### Support for New Teachers:

Johnson and Birkeland (2003) delve into the factors impacting new teachers' career choices, highlighting the pivotal role of support from colleagues, mentors, and administrators. They emphasize that positive social support is instrumental in helping new teachers feel competent and valued, fostering the development of a robust professional identity. New teachers with strong support systems are more likely to remain in the profession and cultivate a cohesive professional identity.

Le Maistre and Paré (2010) explore the survival strategies of beginning teachers, underlining the significance of social support from mentors and colleagues. They find that new teachers heavily rely on social networks to navigate professional challenges. Supportive relationships contribute to building confidence and a sense of professional identity, crucial for long-term success in teaching.

Smith and Ingersoll (2004) highlight that formal mentoring substantially reduces turnover rates among new teachers and aids in identity formation. Similarly, Veenman (2013) explores the challenges and problems that new teachers perceive during their initial years in the profession. The study focuses on identifying the common difficulties faced by novice teachers, such as classroom management, workload, and adapting to the educational environment. Veenman emphasizes that understanding these perceived problems is crucial for developing targeted support and professional development programs to help new teachers successfully navigate their early career challenges and improve their effectiveness in the classroom.

### Addressing Gender Stereotypes and Enhancing Professional Pride

Kessels and Hannover (2008) demonstrate that social support can mitigate the negative impact of gender stereotypes on teachers, promoting enthusiasm and a positive professional identity. They emphasize the importance of supportive interactions with colleagues and mentors in reinforcing teachers' self-concept and professional pride.

Social support is essential in shaping teachers' professional identity by providing emotional, informational, and practical assistance from significant others, colleagues, administrators, and mentors. Supportive relationships foster a sense of belonging, enhance motivation, and help teachers manage the emotional demands of the profession. By prioritizing social support within educational settings, stakeholders can help teachers build strong, confident, and committed professional identities, ultimately benefiting the entire school community.

4) Media influence: Media has a profound influence on how teaching as a profession is perceived and chosen by individuals. Kasperuniene and Zydziunaite (2019) provide a comprehensive review of existing research on how professional identities are constructed and managed through social media platforms. It explores how social media influences individuals' self-presentation, networking, and career development, highlighting both opportunities and challenges.

Deuze and Lewis (2014) investigate how professional identity is formed within the realm of media work. The paper delves into the effects of media-related employment on individuals' self-perception and professional identity, emphasizing the distinct challenges and dynamics encountered by media professionals. It explores how elements such as job roles, organizational culture, and industry practices impact the development of professional identity in the media sector. The study underscores the difficulties of maintaining a balance between personal and professional identities in an industry marked by constant change and significant uncertainty.

O'Regan et al. (2018) explore how social media affects the professional identity of individuals, particularly in the medical field. The paper examines both the

potential benefits and risks associated with social media use for professionals. Pitfalls: Social media can pose risks such as breaches of professional boundaries, damage to reputation, and issues related to privacy and confidentiality. Potential: On the positive side, social media offers opportunities for networking, professional development, and the sharing of knowledge and resources. The study highlights the need for awareness and strategic management of social media presence to protect and enhance professional identity while avoiding potential pitfalls.

Bossio (2023) examines how journalists utilize Instagram to shape and present their professional identities and roles. The paper explores the impact of image-focused social media on how journalists curate and communicate their professional personas. It investigates the strategies journalists use to integrate personal and professional content, manage their public image, and engage with their audience. The study emphasizes the challenges and complexities of maintaining a professional identity on a platform that emphasizes visual content and personal branding.

In conclusion, the literature collectively underscores the significant influence of media on perceptions, attitudes, and decisions related to teaching as a profession. Understanding media representations and enhancing media literacy skills are crucial for individuals navigating career choices in the teaching profession.

5) Social environment: Rogers and Scott (2008) emphasize the profound influence of social and cultural interactions on teachers' professional identity, which is a dynamic and continually evolving construct. They highlight how our daily engagement in social and cultural environments shapes our learning experiences, contributing significantly to the formation of our professional identity as educators. This perspective aligns with Wenger's (1998) and Timotuk and Ugaste's (2012) views on learning as an active process within social communities, where identities are constructed through participation. Therefore, social involvement plays a crucial role in shaping teachers' professional identities.

Similarly, Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) delve into the concept of "dirty work" and its implications for professional identity development. They explore how individuals in stigmatized or socially undesirable professions navigate their identities in response to societal perceptions. This study underscores the impact of social environments and organizational contexts on individuals' perceptions of their work and professional identities.

Meoli et al. (2020) examine how entrepreneurial intentions influence individuals' decisions to pursue entrepreneurial careers and how this relationship is moderated by social context. The study reveals that entrepreneurial intentions generally increase the likelihood of choosing an entrepreneurial path, but this effect is significantly amplified by a supportive social environment. Factors such as supportive networks, cultural norms, and institutional resources are crucial in facilitating the transition from entrepreneurial intentions to actual career choices.

In conclusion, these studies collectively emphasize the significant role of social environments, cultural contexts, and organizational settings in shaping individuals' professional identities. They underscore the dynamic and interactive nature of identity construction, influenced by social interactions, cultural norms, and perceptions within various professional and organizational contexts.

Based on the content provided, it can be concluded that social support encompasses national policies, social status, media influence, significant others, and the social environment.

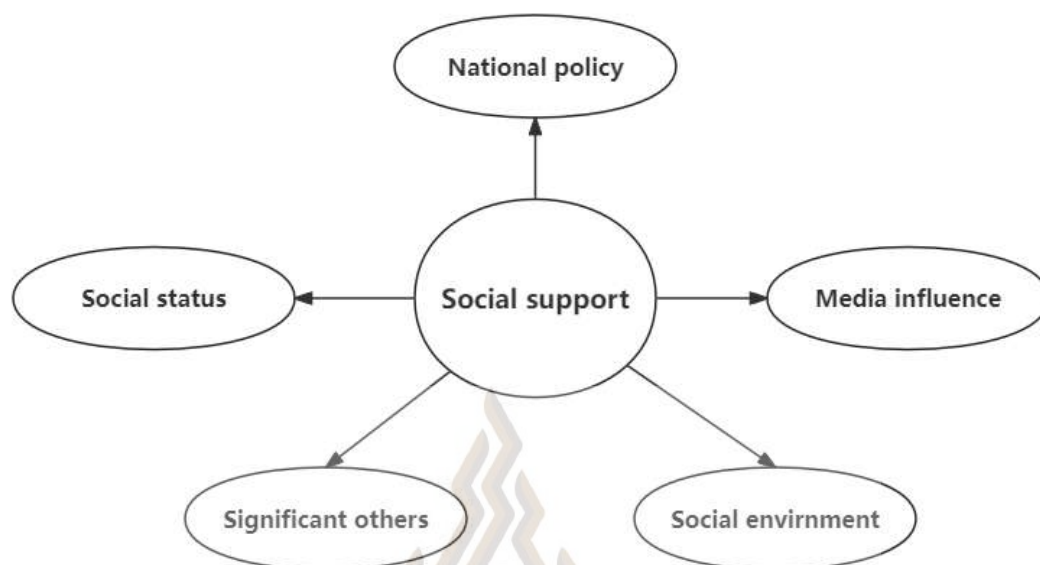


Figure 2.2 Social Support

Source: Researcher

Social support plays a pivotal role in shaping teachers' professional identity and well-being. Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources theory (1989) suggests that social support is a key resource that individuals seek to conserve and build. In the context of teaching, social support helps educators manage stress and conserve their emotional and psychological resources. This support is critical for maintaining a positive professional identity, especially in challenging work environments. In essence, social support networks serve as a valuable resource for teachers, helping them navigate challenges, foster professional growth, and maintain a positive professional identity within the dynamic context of education.

## 2.4 The Dimensions of Teachers' Professional Identity

In the existing research on teachers' professional identity, due to the difference in scholars' definitions of teachers' professional identity and the difference in research objects, the structure of teachers' professional identity is divided differently (Beijaard et al., 2004; Widodo et al., 2020). The structural dimension of teachers' professional identity usually comes from three perspectives: First, from the perspective of

psychology, professional identity is divided into cognitive components, emotional components, and behavioral tendencies components. The second is from the perspective of sociology, through the analysis of the relationship between teachers and the surrounding society to evaluate the situation of teachers' professional identity. The first and second usually obtain the dimension of professional identity through theoretical analysis. The third is the teachers' professional identity from the perspective of pragmatic methodology. The researchers use the cross-examination method and the comprehensive use of quantitative and qualitative methods to carry out research.

Kremer and Hofman (1981) argue that teachers' professional identity includes four sub-identities: (a) centrality, which refers to its importance, significance, and interconnection; (b) valence refers to its value and attractiveness; (c) solidarity, the readiness to share a common destiny with colleagues; (d) self-presentation refers to the willingness to be recognized by others as a professional (teacher). Centrality and value are usually co-variable, but this is not necessary.

Meyer et al. (1993) put forth a comprehensive three-dimensional model of professional identity that encompasses emotional identity, continuous identity, and normative identity. (a) Emotional Identity: This dimension of professional identity centers on the emotional connection and attachment that individuals have to their profession. It includes the feelings, attitudes, values, and beliefs that teachers associate with their role as educators. (b) Continuous Identity: Continuous identity refers to the ongoing development, growth, and adaptation that occur throughout a teacher's career. It encompasses reflective practice, professional learning, skill acquisition, and the integration of new knowledge and experiences into one's teaching practice. (c) Normative Identity: Normative identity pertains to the values, ethics, and standards that guide professional behavior and decision-making within the teaching profession. It encompasses adherence to professional codes of conduct, ethical principles, and legal regulations governing education. Normative identity also includes a commitment to equity, inclusivity, social justice, and the promotion of student well-being and academic success.

Beijaard et al. (2000) explain teachers' professional identity in terms of three dimensions: teaching discipline, teacher-student relationship, and one's own role. (a) Teaching discipline refers to how teachers perceive and define their role within their specific subject area or discipline; (b) Teacher-Student relationship focuses on the interactions, dynamics, and connections teachers establish with their students; (c) One's own role pertains to how teachers perceive their broader role and responsibilities within the educational system and society.

Brickson (2000) puts forward a three-factor model for the establishment of teachers' professional identity. The model suggests that teacher identity is formed through individual, collective, and mutual factors, each of which involves cognition, emotion, behavior, and social aspects.

Factor 1: Personal Factors. (a) Cognitive: Seeing oneself as a distinct individual, capable of distinguishing and personalizing experiences. (b) Emotional: Maintaining positive emotions even when not with the group. (c) Behavioral: Acting in self-interest and striving for a positive personality. (d) Social: Recognizing the relationship between oneself and others, having a sense of depersonalization.

Factor 2: Collective Factors. (a) Cognitive: Viewing oneself as a member of a group. (b) Emotional: Managing emotions for maximum benefit and minimal harm. (c) Behavioral: Acting and developing a career according to self-interest within the group. (d) Social: Engaging in frequent and quality communication with others, recognized by the group.

Factor 3: Mutual Factors. (a) Cognitive: Perceiving self-esteem and interpersonal connections with others. (b) Emotional: Having positive self-esteem, trust, and happiness in relationships. (c) Behavioral: Considering the interests of others in actions, exhibiting high-quality behavior. (d) Social: Engaging in frequent and high-quality interactions with others, establishing common connections.

These factors and aspects collectively contribute to the formation and establishment of a teacher's professional identity, highlighting the interplay between individual, group, and interpersonal dynamics.

Yu (2006) points out that teachers' professional identity has nine dimensions: (a) professional competence: the recognition of the knowledge and skills one possesses in the occupation, that is, the judgment of whether one is qualified for the occupation with one's own ability; (b) Professional meaning: the sense of meaning and value brought by the teaching profession to individuals; (c) Cognition of professional characteristics: including individual teachers' cognition of professional characteristics of teachers; (d) The identification of the leader; (e) Recognition of colleagues; (f) Recognition of students; (g) Recognition of the rewards of work; (h) Recognition of the work background; (i) Judgments about a sense of belonging or community in the school.

Wei (2008) states that teachers' professional identity has four dimensions: professional value, role value, professional sense of belonging, and professional behavior tendency. (a) Professional value: Individual teachers' positive understanding and evaluation of the significance and function of the teaching profession. (b) Role value: Individual teachers' positive cognition and evaluation of the importance of "teacher role" to themselves are manifested as individual teachers. The willingness of "teachers" to identify themselves and answer "who I am" in the role of "teachers". (c) Professional sense of belonging: Individual teachers realize that they belong to a member of the teacher group, and often have the emotional experience of sharing weal and woe with the teacher profession. (d) Professional behavior tendency: The teacher exhibits behavior necessary for the completion of work tasks and the performance of professional responsibilities, although not explicitly defined in professional responsibilities. Definite but beneficial behavioral tendencies to improve occupational work effectiveness.

Shoulders (2018) points out that there are five sub-constructs of professional identity, which are respectively knowledge of the Profession, philosophy of the Profession, professional poles and expertise, attitude, engagement behaviors, and

interaction. (a) Knowledge of the Profession: The depth and breadth of understanding and expertise regarding the subject matter, pedagogy, curriculum, and educational theories relevant to the teaching profession. (b) Philosophy of the Profession: Personal beliefs, values, and principles that guide teaching practices, educational goals, and the overall purpose of education. (c) Professional poles and expertise: The roles, responsibilities, and specialized knowledge or skills that define a teacher's expertise within the profession, such as subject area expertise, leadership roles, or special education training. (d) Attitude: The disposition, mindset, and approach towards teaching, learning, challenges, and professional growth. (e) Engagement behaviors: The level of involvement, collaboration, communication, and interpersonal interactions within the educational community, including students, colleagues, parents, and stakeholders. (f) Interaction: Participating in meaningful interactions and engagement behaviors reinforces a teacher's sense of belonging, efficacy, and professional identity within the educational community.

Cavazos Montemayorr et al. (2020) underscore the multifaceted nature of professional identity among faculty developers in medical education. The identified dimensions—commitment to teaching, sense of belonging, professional growth, recognition and validation, and reflective practice—are critical for building and maintaining a strong professional identity. (a) Commitment to Teaching: Faculty developers emphasize the importance of being passionate and dedicated to teaching as a core component of their professional identity. (b) Sense of Belonging: Building strong professional networks and feeling connected to the medical education community are essential for a robust professional identity. (c) Professional Growth: Ongoing professional development and a commitment to lifelong learning are critical for maintaining and enhancing professional identity. (d) Recognition and Validation: Receiving feedback and recognition from peers and institutions helps reinforce a positive professional identity and motivates faculty developers to continue excelling in their roles.

Fahmi et al. (2022) conduct a study to reveal that there are five components of accounting teachers' professional identity, namely, cultural Knowledge (pedagogical

cultural identity), blending (accommodating students' purposes for school in the learning objectives), identity Experiencing (the experience of working life in the past, present, and individual expectations in the future in an accounting work setting), inter-Personal Skill and active in Professional Communities.

Scholars have explored the dimensions of teachers' professional identity from various perspectives, offering nuanced insights into its multifaceted nature. Their studies and analyses reveal a range of dimensions and components that contribute to the complexity of professional identity among educators.

## 2.5 Related Researches

Mehdizadeh, Pourhaji, and Derakhshan (2024) conducted a study focusing on the evolution of communities of practice and its impact on the professional identity development of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. The study employed a longitudinal case study approach to examine how participation in communities of practice influences teachers' perceptions of themselves (possible selves) and their roles within the EFL teaching context.

Ou and Gu (2024) investigated the relationship between teacher professional identities and the implementation of translanguaging pedagogies in a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) English-Medium Instruction (EMI) classroom context in China. The study employed a nexus analysis approach to examine how teachers' professional identities influence their instructional practices and use of translanguaging strategies in the EMI classroom.

In Han's chapter (2024) titled "Development of teacher professional identity through problem-based learning programs" in the book "The Development of Professional Identity in Higher Education," the focus was on exploring how problem-based learning (PBL) programs contribute to the development of teacher professional identity. The chapter likely presented a comprehensive analysis of how problem-based learning programs contribute to the development of teacher professional identity,

emphasizing the interconnectedness between pedagogical approaches, experiential learning, and identity formation in the context of higher education and teacher preparation.

Tsybulsky and Muchnik-Rozanov's study (2023) investigated the impact of a project-based learning (PBL) course, designed with a focus on pedagogy of practice, on the development of preservice teachers' professional identity. The finding delved into how a project-based learning course, grounded in a pedagogy of practice, shapes the professional identities of preservice teachers, shedding light on the effectiveness of experiential and applied learning approaches in teacher education.

Beijaard, Koopman, and Schellings (2023) contributed to the discourse on teacher professional identity and learning within the broader context of teacher education research. The chapter likely presented a thoughtful analysis of teacher professional identity and learning, offering theoretical frameworks, empirical evidence, and practical implications within the broader landscape of teacher education research.

Burak, Gultekin, and Yasar (2022) conducted a study examining the professional identities of academic staff within Turkey's faculties of education. Employing the Q technique, which integrates both quantitative and qualitative data, the study employed a two-stage approach for data collection and analysis. Initially, seven academics from the faculty of education were interviewed to gather qualitative insights. Subsequently, quantitative data was collected from 21 academics within the same faculty, which was then analyzed using the Q measuring tool. The study's findings revealed that the educational experiences of academic staff significantly influence their preferences and attitudes towards professional identities within faculties of education.

In a study by Fahmi et al. (2022), the components of accounting teachers' professional identity were investigated through two stages of exploratory factor analysis. Each stage involved a sample of 150 accounting teachers. The findings revealed five key components of accounting teacher professional identity, represented by 23 question items. These components include: Cultural Knowledge (referring to pedagogical

cultural identity); Blending (accommodating students' purposes for school in learning objectives); Identity Experiencing (involving experiences from past, present, and future expectations in the accounting work setting); Inter-Personal Skill; Active Engagement in Professional Communities.

In a study by Dilek and Altas (2022), the extent of professional identity and professional autonomy among 250 Turkish EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers was assessed. The research also aimed to explore potential variations in findings based on factors such as gender, institution of employment, educational attainment, and prior employment experience. Additionally, the study sought to examine the relationship between professional autonomy and professional identity among EFL teachers. The results revealed a significant, positive, and moderate correlation between the professional identity and professional autonomy of EFL teachers. This suggests that EFL teachers tend to enhance their professional identities in the classroom when they have greater freedom to make decisions concerning their teaching methods and career paths.

In a study conducted by Celebi and Eraldemir-Tuyan (2022), 130 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lecturers from both state and foundation universities in Turkey were examined. The aim was to assess whether English teachers required retraining and the establishment of new norms to effectively transition to online classrooms while maintaining their teaching pedagogy and professional identity amidst the sudden changes caused by the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in education. The findings indicated that participants' perceptions of their professional identities during the transition to online language instruction were influenced by their prior exposure to educational technology, whether acquired during their undergraduate studies or through professional development initiatives.

Hashemi, Karimi, and Mofidi (2021) undertook a study aiming to construct and authenticate a questionnaire concerning EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher professional identity, utilizing a sequential mixed methods approach. The qualitative phase involved 24 participants, while the quantitative phase involved 750 EFL teachers.

The initial inventory version was crafted via exploratory factor analysis and subsequently validated utilizing structural equation modeling. The outcomes of the research present a comprehensive portrayal of the multi-faceted nature of EFL teacher professional identity.

In their study, Buckler et al. (2021) explored how professional development open educational resources (OER) impacted the roles of 39 instructors across eight colleges in Uganda. Employing a narrative methodology, the researchers facilitated tutors in crafting personal accounts of their work, aiming to reveal fresh insights into their profession. Analyzing these narratives through a professional identity lens, the researchers found that the instructors emerged as caring and proactive individuals dedicated to their growth as teacher educators, each with a distinct approach to their profession. Understanding the subtleties of tutor professional identity provided valuable insights into why professional development OER tailored for this group failed to yield the intended effects.

In their study, Volkov and Chikarova (2021) investigated the influence of the digital revolution in Russian society on the development of professional identity among young teachers. Utilizing extensive interviews as their primary method of data collection, the researchers found that digitization has a positive impact on the development of young teachers' professional identities. However, they emphasize that while the sudden transition to online education has elevated the status of teaching, digitalization alone cannot significantly transform the professional landscape or make the teaching profession more attractive to young professionals.

In their study, Othman and Fahd Aljuhaishi (2021) investigated the impact of contextual factors on the professional identity construction of three EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers at a Saudi school in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the researchers utilized in-depth interviews and classroom observations to gather data. The findings underscored the intricate and context-dependent nature of identity formation. The participants crafted their identities through active engagement in their teaching environment, exchanging practices with

peers, fostering relationships with students and parents, and participating in professional development activities. Transitioning into the English as a Second Language (ESL) setting highlighted the dynamic and socially situated nature of professional identity construction for these EFL teachers. Importantly, the study suggests that global educational contexts can shape and transform teachers' identities. These insights enhance our understanding of the significance of a supportive professional environment in facilitating the development of teachers' professional identities.

Lubsky and Chikarova (2021) proposed a multidimensional methodological framework for studying the professional identity of young teachers in Russian society. Developed within the "soft conception" of identity, this framework integrates both Russian and international theoretical and methodological insights. The construct delineates internal and external factors influencing the formation of young teachers' professional identities, as well as the structure, functions, and various types—both real and ideal—of such identities. By identifying trends in the evolution of real professional identities, the framework enables an assessment of the trajectory of transformation in the professional identity of young teachers in Russian society, achieved through a comparative analysis with ideal types.

In their study, Lee and Kim (2021) delved into the identities of a Gyopo instructor functioning as an English teacher, exploring how these identities manifested in classroom activities. The researchers employed interviews, classroom observations, and participant-written self-reflective reports as primary data collection methods. The participant crafted several professional identities, including that of a teacher with expertise in teaching foreign languages, a facilitator bridging cultural gaps, a multitasker managing various roles, an American instructor not native in English, and a potentially replaceable individual. Struggling with identity challenges, she continuously navigated and adjusted her multiple, sometimes conflicting identities to improve her professional circumstances.

Ko and Kim (2021) conducted a study to explore the professional identities of two Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) employed at Korean universities and how

these identities were reflected in their classroom practices. The researchers employed interviews, classroom observations, and material gathering to collect data. The findings revealed that the NESTs developed multiple identities influenced by various factors, such as prior experiences and academic backgrounds. One NEST exhibited strong identities as a teacher, writer, and caregiver, while the other demonstrated weaker identities as a role model for language learning and a caregiver. Despite these differences, both NESTs consistently portrayed a core identity as guides aiming to foster supportive and inclusive learning environments.

In 2021, Khojeev conducted a qualitative study aiming to delineate the diverse relationships between the professional identities of teachers and tutors, uncover their underlying causes, and assess their impact on professional activities. The findings, derived from semi-structured interviews with six university faculty members who also served as private tutors, revealed three predominant categories: power dynamics, temporal influences, and contradictions. Notably, the study indicated that these types of relationships adversely affected the respondents' performance and practices as private tutors.

In 2021, Çagatay explored the professional identity of non-native English teachers in Turkey, focusing on the influence of linguistic aspects such as pronunciation and intonation. Employing a descriptive research methodology grounded in quantitative data analysis, the study engaged 60 non-native English lecturers selected from 29 Turkish universities. The participants were carefully chosen to ensure representativeness. The findings from the professional identity survey revealed that the majority of participants emphasized pronunciation instruction in their teaching. Moreover, a significant disparity was observed between those who had undergone phonology training and those who hadn't.

In 2021, Mommers, Schellings, and Beijaard conducted a study aimed at documenting the creation and evaluation of three online tasks designed to facilitate the exploration of professional identity among 46 novice teachers across 11 secondary schools. These tasks were developed drawing from research on the influence of

"significant others" and "stories to live by" on the formation of teachers' professional identities. Through data analysis, it was determined that each task provided valuable insights for guiding beginning teachers in their identity development journey, thus contributing to their future professional growth.

In 2021, Rostami, Yousefi, and Amini employed a qualitative research approach to explore the multifaceted aspects of professional identities among Iranian in-service teachers working in exceptional schools. Data were collected through in-depth interviews conducted with 14 in-service teachers selected through purposive sampling. Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the qualitative data, revealing three prominent themes: relationships, lower identity, and professional identity. The study's findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, curriculum designers, educational psychologists, and teacher educators, aiding them in better understanding and supporting the professional development needs of teachers in exceptional schools.

In 2021, Richter, Brunner, and Richter highlighted the significant interplay between task perception, professional identity, and teaching practices among teacher educators. It emphasizes that a positive perception of tasks and a strong professional identity contribute to more effective and innovative teaching practices. The findings suggest that supporting teacher educators in developing a balanced and positive view of their roles can enhance their professional identity and improve their teaching effectiveness. This has important implications for the design and support of teacher education programs, which should aim to foster these elements to ensure high-quality education.

In 2021, Zhurat et al. highlight the potential benefits of incorporating a neuropedagogical approach into teacher training programs. By fostering self-awareness, reflective practices, and a strong professional identity, neuropedagogy can significantly contribute to the development of professional subjectivity in future primary school teachers. The findings suggest that teacher education programs should consider integrating neuroscience-based strategies to enhance the overall effectiveness of teacher preparation and support the continuous professional growth of educators.

In 2020, Mannes undertook a study investigating the evolving professional identities of both native and non-native English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher educators as their roles shifted. Interviews served as the primary method for data collection. The findings highlighted a prevalent tension between research and teaching responsibilities, causing frustration among EFL teacher educators. Regarding personal background, the majority of interviewees expressed the belief that such factors were not deemed crucial to their professional identity.

In 2020, Fahd Aljuhaish, Othman, and Senom conducted a study to explore the impact of participants' educational backgrounds, life experiences, and professional contexts on their professional identities as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Saudi secondary schools. The researchers collected data through in-depth interviews and classroom observations involving three EFL teachers based in Riyadh. The findings indicated that educational background and life experiences served as influential factors in shaping their professional identity as EFL teachers. Additionally, the participating teachers collectively acknowledged that practical experience and involvement in the teaching community played a more significant role than their formal education in shaping both their teacher identity formation and their classroom practices.

In 2019, Frausto Hernandez utilized a qualitative approach to explore the lived epistemologies and phenomenological development of professional identities among participants known as transnationals, who had migrated between Mexico and the United States. The study revealed that the participants' previous immigrant experiences exerted a profound influence on how their English teaching practice perceived them.

In 2019, Atal and Deryakulu conducted a study focusing on the professional identity of ICT teachers in response to educational changes initiated by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in Turkey, particularly concerning ICT education and technology integration. The investigation utilized an in-depth content analysis technique. The findings revealed that over 11 years of changes, the professional identities of ICT teachers experienced negative effects. Factors such as excessive workload, additional

duties, and obligations unrelated to the profession had adverse impacts on ICT instructors' perceptions of their tasks, motivation, and self-image.

In 2019, Alvarado Gutiérrez, Neira Adasme, and Westmacott conducted a study aimed at exploring the development of aspiring English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' professional identities through reflective practice at a university in northern Chile. Qualitative data were gathered through a focus group discussion involving 12 participants, aiming to capture their experiences with the workshop. A hybrid thematic analysis of their responses revealed three significant ways in which the participants' emerging teacher professional identities were strengthened: they gained self-assurance in their problem-solving abilities, developed a deeper appreciation for collaboration, and heightened their awareness of the need for teachers to adapt and evolve.

In 2018, Shoulders employed a researcher-adapted survey to characterize the professional identities of agriculture teachers in Arkansas. The results revealed that teachers predominantly identified themselves as agriculture teachers rather than as agriculturalists or educators. Additionally, it was found that the professional identity of agricultural educators significantly differed from that of educators or agriculturalists. Interestingly, the length of teaching experience did not show any correlation with the professional identity score.

In 2018, Sedivy-Benton, Leland, and Pinneo delved into the experiences of three teacher educators, examining their entry into the field and the discovery of their communities of practice and professional identities. The study revealed that their professional identities and self-concepts were still evolving, indicating that the development of a professional identity follows a cyclical rather than linear trajectory. Critical events, resilience, and transformative learning emerged as major themes shaping their journeys.

In 2017, Cameron and Grant conducted a study involving interviews with 18 teachers to investigate the influence of external tutoring on the development of Science teachers' Teacher Professional Identity (TPI). While the TPI of the participants began to

form during their initial training, the authors suggest that the workplace environment could also play a role in shaping this professional identity. The study findings indicate a direct correlation between the evolution of TPI and training needs. Specifically, they highlight that participants' TPI may have undergone significant development as a result of the external mentoring process.

In 2017, Bressler and Rotter explored the professional identities of immigrant teachers through qualitative research methods. The study identified two distinct professional identity frameworks among the participants: Teachers who embrace the "special skills" attributed to them, with their immigrant background serving as the cornerstone of their professional identity; Teachers who resist these expectations and instead draw upon their pedagogical competencies, aligning themselves with colleagues who do not share immigrant backgrounds. These findings highlight the diverse ways in which immigrant teachers navigate and construct their professional identities within the educational landscape.

In 2017, Dalby conducted a study exploring the responsibilities and identities of mathematics teachers through surveys and interviews. The research elucidated the interplay between teachers' narratives and their professional identities, shedding light on how their personal experiences with mathematics in formal education and the workplace influence their attitudes.

In 2016, Hsieh emphasized the importance of personal experiences, reflective practices grounded in praxis, and pedagogically focused assessments in fostering the development of an emerging professional identity. This identity should effectively integrate literate practices with subject-specific instruction. Both Teacher Educators (TEs) within and outside of literacy domains can enhance their comprehension of how personal and professional experiences shape Teacher Candidates' (TCs) perspectives on classroom instruction by employing a professional identity framework. This approach facilitates the support of TCs in cultivating practical knowledge and recognizing the significance of specific pedagogical frameworks within their unique teaching.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Methodology**

This chapter presents the study's research methods starting with the research design, research site, research population and sample, the instruments, validity, and reliability of the chosen instruments, data collection, and data analysis. In other words, by adopting carefully chosen techniques and an appropriate research procedure, the answers are expected to be found for the three research questions which are:

- 1) What are the kindergarten teachers' life stories about their professional identity?
- 2) What are the influencing factors of kindergarten teachers' professional identity?
- 3) What is the relationship between the influencing factors and kindergarten teachers' professional identity?
- 4) What should be the development model for kindergarten teachers' professional identity?

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study adopted the mixed methods explanatory sequential research design which aimed to incorporate both the qualitative (dealing with data in texts) methods and the quantitative (dealing with data in numbers) as both types of data will enrich the findings of the study. Narrative research is the main means of collecting qualitative method primary data. Narrative research designs involve researchers describing people's lives, gathering and sharing tales about people's lives, and writing narratives of people's experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). A story in narrative research is a first-person oral telling or retelling of an individual (Carter, 1993). The stories constitute the data, and the researcher typically gathers it through interviews or informal conversations (Creswell, 2012). A questionnaire is the main means of collecting quantitative primary

data and the questionnaire data will reveal what most questionnaire respondents perceive. The following table illustrates the plan of this study. It shows that the qualitative data from life-story interviews voiced by nine kindergarten teachers and the quantitative data come from responses to the questionnaire distributed to 396 kindergarten teachers.

The writing process is as follows:

First, this study aimed to analyze the kindergarten teachers' life stories with grounded theory to get influencing factors.

Second, the questionnaire was designed by the four influencing factors. The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to analyze the questionnaire data and delete and modify the questionnaire to ensure the good structure of the questionnaire. Then, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to verify the validity of the formal questionnaire.

Third, the questionnaire responses were analyzed with SEM to examine the relationship between the influencing factors and kindergarten teachers' professional identity.

Finally, the emerging model was confirmed by a focus group with 4 experts.

Table 3.1 Research Plan of this Study

| Research Questions                                                                    | Instruments            | Participants                             | Data Collection         | Data Analysis   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 1.What are the kindergarten teachers' life stories about their professional identity? | Life stories interview | 9 kindergarten teachers were interviewed | Online using WeChat, QQ | Grounded theory |
| 2. What are the influencing factors of kindergarten teachers' professional identity?  | Life stories interview | 9 kindergarten teachers were interviewed | Online using WeChat, QQ | Grounded theory |

Table 3.1 Research Plan of this Study (Cont.)

|                                                                                                               |               |                                                                    |                           |                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 3. What is the relationship between the influencing factors and kindergarten teachers' professional identity? | Questionnaire | 396 kindergarten teachers participated in the questionnaire survey | Online using WeChat, QQ   | Structural Equation Model |
| 4. What should be the development model for kindergarten teachers' professional identity?                     | Focus Group   | 4 experts                                                          | Online using Zoom meeting | Content analysis          |

### 3.2 Research Site

In this study, Hubei Province was selected from 34 provinces in China as the research site. The reason is that education in Hubei Province is at the top level in China. There are 130 universities in total, including 68 undergraduate and 62 junior colleges in Hubei province. 2 world-class universities (985) and 5 world-class universities with discipline construction (211).

This study was carried out in Hubei Province, which has 13 prefecture-level cities, 3 directly administered county-level cities, and 1 directly administered forest area, a total of 17 regions. According to the population ranking of cities in Hubei Province, Wuhan, the biggest city has the largest population, Jingmen, an average city has an average population, and Qianjiang, the smallest city with who has the smallest population, was selected as the study sites. The population of the Shenlongjia forest area ranks last, but due to its geographical specificity, it is not included in the comparison. The samples and cases in this study were all from public and private kindergartens in three cities.

### 3.3 Research Population

In this study, 33239 kindergarten teachers from three cities were the population of the study.

Table 3.2 Information about kindergarten Teachers in the Three Cities

| City                  | Wuhan | Jingmen | Qianjiang |
|-----------------------|-------|---------|-----------|
| Kindergarten teachers | 28786 | 3202    | 1251      |
| Total                 | 33239 |         |           |

Resource: Hubei Provincial Statistics Bureau, 2023

### 3.4 Research Sample Groups

Sample in questionnaire survey:

Based on the chosen method of calculation, 396 samples emerged through the Stratified Sampling method. The sample size was calculated with the formula of Yamane (1967) as shown below.

$$N = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} \quad (3-1)$$

When n= size of sample group

N= size of all population

e = the missing adjusting rate in random sampling at the level of 0.05.

There were 33,239 preschool teachers in the three cities, the stratified sampling method was used and calculated as follows:

1) Wuhan city:  $396 \times 28785 \div 33239 = 343$

2) Jingmen city:  $396 \times 3202 \div 33239 = 38$

3) Qianjiang city:  $396 \times 1251 \div 33239 = 15$

Sample in life story interviews:

Interviews with nine Hubei kindergarten teachers from a range of age groups, kindergarten settings, and residential locations will take place. The participants are

diverse in terms of their characteristics, professional, and demographic. According to Day and Gu (2010), teachers were categorized into 3 groups, novice (0-5 years), experienced (6-14 years), and expert (15 years and above). The working experience of teachers is the primary basis for selecting the number and object of individual cases. We adopted a purposive selection of the main participants (9 people) in terms of the features that could bear significantly on teachers' professional identity to ensure the selection of information-rich cases. The life stories interviewees were given the assurance that their responses were included in the study anonymously and without any identifying information.

Table 3.3 Participants Profiles

| City      | Teacher | Lable      | Gender | Educational background | Professional title | Working experience |
|-----------|---------|------------|--------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Wuhan     | A       | Novice     | Female | undergraduate          | No                 | 1                  |
|           | B       | Experience | Male   | undergraduate          | Junior             | 7                  |
|           | C       | Expert     | Female | Junior college         | Senior             | 21                 |
| Jingmen   | D       | Novice     | Female | undergraduate          | Junior             | 2                  |
|           | E       | Experience | Female | undergraduate          | Intermediate       | 9                  |
|           | F       | Expert     | Female | Junior college         | Senior             | 18                 |
| Qianjiang | G       | Novice     | Male   | undergraduate          | Junior             | 4                  |
|           | H       | Experience | Female | Junior college         | Intermediate       | 12                 |
|           | J       | Expert     | Female | Junior college         | Senior             | 24                 |

Sample in a focus group:

In this study, 4 experts were selected for focus group discussion through purposive sampling. Experts in the field of early childhood education were selected from Yunnan Technology and Business University, Hubei Normal University, and Krirk University.

Table 3.4 Experts Profiles

| No. | Experts  | Occupation                                                                                                         | Nation |
|-----|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 1   | Expert 1 | 1. Professor in Yunnan Technology and Business University<br>2. Expert in preschool teacher professional education | China  |
| 2   | Expert 2 | 1. Lecturer in Yunnan Technology and Business University<br>2. Expert in preschool teacher professional education  | China  |
| 3   | Expert 3 | 1. Lecturer in Hubei Normal University<br>2. Expert in preschool teacher professional education                    | China  |
| 4   | Expert 4 | 1. Professor in Krirk University<br>2. Expert in preschool teacher professional education                          | China  |

### 3.5 Research Instruments

#### 3.5.1 The Life Stories Interview

According to Denzin (1996), life stories are records of life-based on the results of conversations or interviews. Every life story is the product of creation, negotiation, and exchange. A life history or specific story expresses our sense of self: "who I am," "how I became this person," and so on. Life stories are an important tool for us to communicate and negotiate with others through our sense of self. The life stories interview outline was compiled by combining the research content with the existing literature. As is common in qualitative research, the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed (See Appendix C).

The interview questions were designed for kindergarten teachers, as follows:

- 1) Why do you choose to be a kindergarten teacher?
- 2) What was your previous view of the kindergarten teaching profession?
- 3) What was your present view of the kindergarten teaching profession?
- 4) What is the event or person in your career that has impressed you the most? Why?
- 5) Do you want to change your job? Why?

### 3.5.2 Questionnaire

This research questionnaire mainly consists of three parts:

Table 3.5 Questionnaire Component Information

| Part   | Items | Category                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Part 1 | 1-10  | Basic information: age, gender, major, education background, teaching years, professional title, marital status, kindergarten nature of work, kindergarten's location, monthly salary |
| Part 2 | 1-28  | Influencing factors: self-image, self-efficacy, job satisfaction and social support                                                                                                   |
| Part 3 | 1-18  | Professional identity: professional value, role value, professional sense of belonging, professional behavior tendency                                                                |

Influencing factor part: In this study, the narrative research method was used to collect the data from nine kindergarten teachers in Hubei province. Their life stories were obtained to semi-structured interviews. The interviewed data were analyzed with the grounded theory method. Four influencing factors emerged, namely: self-image, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, social support. These four influencing factors were adopted to construct the questionnaire for 396 kindergarten teachers. This instrument consisted of 28 items: self-image sub-scale = 8 items; self-efficacy sub-scale = 7 items; job satisfaction sub-scale = 8 items and social support sub-scale = 5 items. On a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 is Strongly Agree, 4 is Agree, 3 is Neutral, 2 is Disagree, and 1 is Highly Disagree, each item was rated.

Professional identity part: For this part, the study adopted Wei's Maturity Scale (2008) to detect the kindergarten teachers' professional identity in China. The reliability coefficient is 0.893, the validity coefficient is 0.921. In recent years, experts and scholars have carried out several practical tests on it, and the results have proved that the scale has good reliability and validity. As shown in Table 3.6, the scale is divided into four dimensions.

Table 3.6 The Definition of Each Dimension

| Dimensions                      | Definitions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Professional value              | Kindergarten teachers' positive understanding and evaluation of the significance and function of the teaching profession.                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Role value                      | Kindergarten teachers' positive cognition and evaluation of the importance of "teacher role" to themselves are manifested as individual teachers. The willingness of "teachers" to identify themselves and answer "who I am" in the role of "teachers".                                    |
| Professional sense of belonging | Kindergarten teachers realize that they belong to a member of the teacher group, and often have the emotional experience of sharing weal and woe with the teacher profession.                                                                                                              |
| Professional behavior tendency  | The kindergarten teacher exhibits behavior necessary for the completion of work tasks and the performance of professional responsibilities, although not explicitly defined in professional responsibilities. Definite but beneficial behavioral tendencies to improve work effectiveness. |

### 3.5.3 Focus Group Discussion

The purpose of this activity was to confirm the SEM model derived from the questionnaire data. What each expert did was to critically analyze the model by applying their knowledge and experience to evaluate the model.

The discussion question was designed for experts, as follow:

What is your opinion about the SEM model?

## 3.6 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

### 3.6.1 Content Validity

The Item Objective Congruence (IOC) Index is used as the basis for screening the item quality by 5 experts in this study. They reviewed the items in the questionnaire and

removed those with similar meanings or duplications. According to the opinions given by experts, the initial questionnaire is modified to form the prediction questionnaire of this study.

In each item, the experts are asked to determine the content validity score:

The score=1, if the expert is sure that this item measured the attribute.

The score=-1, if the expert is sure that this item does not measure the attribute.

The score=0, if the expert is not sure that the item does measure or does not measure the expected attribute.

The content validity of the questionnaire is 0.825.

The content validity of the interview is 0.92.

### 3.6.2 The Pilot Test for Reliability Check of the Questionnaire

After modification of the questionnaire based on the five experts' judgment, it was piloted with 396 kindergarten teachers who were chosen from Wuhan City, Jingmen City and Qianjiang City. The Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the reliability of the questionnaire. The researcher used Cronbach's alpha to test the correlation coefficients of four influencing factors (Self-image, Self-efficacy, Job satisfaction, and Social support) and the total factors to determine whether the scale has internal reliability.

Table 3.7 The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of Each Factor

| Factors          | Numbers | Cronbach's alpha |
|------------------|---------|------------------|
| Self-image       | 8       | 0.896            |
| Self-efficacy    | 7       | 0.872            |
| Job satisfaction | 8       | 0.881            |
| Social support   | 5       | 0.895            |
| Total            | 28      | 0.943            |

The result was calculated by SPSS 26. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each influencing factor are 0.896, 0.872, 0.881, 0.873, 0.895 and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the total influencing factor is 0.943.

### 3.7 Data Collection

Data collection was done with three groups of people.

Firstly, the researcher interviewed nine kindergarten teachers by using WeChat. At the beginning of the interviews, the participants were informed about the general research guidelines and procedures. During the interview, the researcher listened attentively without leading the interviewee and repeated what the interviewee was telling him/her to make sure that his/her understanding was consistent with what the interviewee is telling him/her and also to allow the interviewee to add information and emphasize the key points (Gerson & Damaske, 2020). Each Interview lasted 60-90 min and was conducted in a relaxed and conversational way, all interviews were audio recorded.

Secondly, the researcher explained the purpose of the questionnaire and distributed the QR code of the questionnaire to the teacher in charge of each school, who then downloaded the QR code and distributed it on online platforms such as WeChat and QQ.

Thirdly, four experts in the field of early childhood education were invited to discuss the SEM model.

### 3.8 Data Analysis

Life story data were analyzed with grounded theory. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory constitutes an innovative methodology, facilitating 'the discovery of theory from data'. Dey (1999) states that researchers using grounded theory set out to gather data, and then break down data to classify it, create or employ the concepts in classifying the data, make the connections between these concepts, and finally provide the basis of a fresh description. Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain that grounded theory procedures consist of three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding is a continuous process to extract "concepts" from the original statement. Axial coding is the process of integrating "concepts" and forming

corresponding categories. Selective coding is the process of looking for logical relationships between categories.

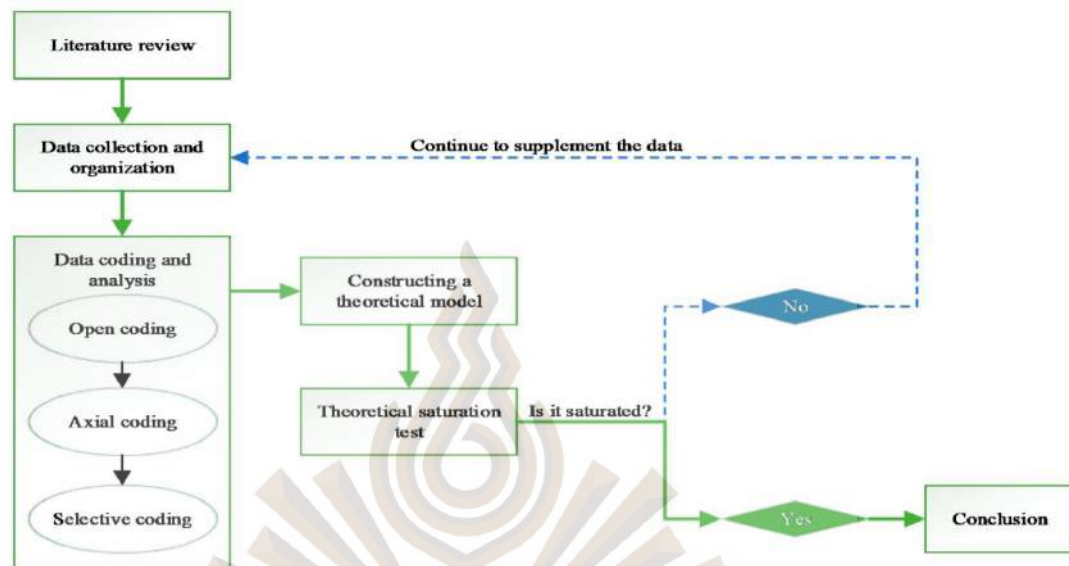


Figure 3.1 Research Plan of Grounded Theory

Source: Li, Du, & Long, 2019

Questionnaire data were analyzed first with the exploratory factor analysis (EFA). EFA is a technique used to find out the essential structure of multiple observed variables and to process dimensionality reduction. Then, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to determine the adequacy of model fit to the data (Suhr, 2006). Finally, the Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used to construct the model. Structural Equation Model (SEM) is a confirmatory factor analysis method with latent variables. It is a combination of the causal model reflecting the relationship between latent variables and the factor model reflecting the relationship between latent variables and latent variables. The latent variables that are difficult to measure directly are expressed by explicit variables, and the latent variables and their indexes are processed simultaneously through the structural equation model (Bandalos & Finney, 2018).

Focus group discussion data were analyzed to confirm the SEM model. Morgan (1996) states that focus groups have three essential components. First, it clearly states that focus groups are a research method devoted to data collection. Second, it locates

the interaction in a group discussion as the source of the data. Third, it acknowledges the researcher's active role in creating the group discussion for data collection purposes.

### 3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations of this study include:

1) The research proposal was approved by the Ethics Review Committee of Rangsit University, granting permission to conduct the study. This approval signifies that the study meets the ethical standards and guidelines set forth by the committee, ensuring that the research adheres to principles of integrity, confidentiality, and respect for participants. The approval certificate is attached in Appendix G.

2) The researcher obtained consent from the nine kindergarten teachers who participated in the life story interviews. Ensuring the privacy and anonymity of respondents was of utmost importance. The questionnaire, designed by the researcher, did not include any fields that could reveal the identities of the respondents. Additionally, participants were given the right to withdraw from the study at any stage if they so wished.

3) The researcher committed to maintaining the highest level of privacy and anonymity for all research participants at all times. This commitment was fundamental to the ethical framework of the study, ensuring that participants could share their experiences and insights without any concerns about their personal information being disclosed.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Research Findings**

This chapter presents an analysis of kindergarten teachers' professional identity. The objectives of this study are to understand kindergarten teachers' life stories about their professional identity, to identify the influencing factors of kindergarten teachers' professional identity, to examine the relationship between the influencing factors and kindergarten teachers' professional identity and to explore a development model of kindergarten teachers' professional identity.

#### **4.1 Analyzing of the Kindergarten Teachers' Life Story about Their Professional Identity**

Nine kindergarten teachers participated in the semi-structured interview. Their life stories are pretended below.

##### **4.1.1 Wuhan City: A, Novice (0-5 years)**

A was born in 2001 in Wuhan City, Hubei Province. She graduated with a degree in preschool education and has been working for one year. She is the only child in her family and her mom and dad love her very much. A lives in a loving family. She is the only child in the family and her parents love her very much. So A's heart has been full of love since childhood.

The reasons for A choosing to become a kindergarten teacher are as follows:

Parents have some influence on career choices. A credits her parents as a great influence because her mom and dad are loving people, so A is also a loving person. A has been interested in children since she was a little girl and loves to play with them.

She wants to be a kindergarten teacher when she grows up, and her mom and dad are very supportive of her becoming a kindergarten teacher.

“I think my mom and dad had some influence on my career choice. My mom and dad are very gentle, loving people. They love me very much and taught me from a very young age to have the ability to love people, so I feel that I am also a person who is full of love.” (J. -D. Zhang, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

“My parents supported me to be a kindergarten teacher very much. My parents think kindergarten teacher is a stable and easy job.” (J. -D. Zhang, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

A has the right personality to become a kindergarten teacher. A is a warm person, full of patience, love and responsibility, perfect for becoming a kindergarten teacher.

“As I grew older, I felt that I was well suited to become a kindergarten teacher because I am loving, patient, and responsible.” (J. -D. Zhang, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

Personal interest is an influential factor in people's choice of career. A has had a strong interest in children since childhood and likes to play with them.

“When I was young, I showed a strong interest in young children. The children in my neighborhood were always gathering together, and I often acted as a small guide, organizing various games for them to play. At that time, I felt that being with children was a particularly fun and fulfilling experience. I had no idea at the time that this interest would become my future career choice.” (J. -D. Zhang, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

“My interest in early childhood education has not only not waned, but has become stronger.” (J. -D. Zhang, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

Doing an internship in a kindergarten strengthened A's determination to become a kindergarten teacher. In the internship, A met a very excellent teacher, through watching her "Thanksgiving class", A found that kindergarten teachers have such a great impact on children."

"I know that kindergarten teaching is a great profession, but I still feel very shocked to see students correct their wrong behavior under the education of teachers. It turns out that early childhood education is such an important profession, and I am proud to be a kindergarten teacher, and I want to be a good one." (J. -D. Zhang, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

Before becoming a kindergarten teacher, A thought the job was great and respected because it contributes a lot to children. This shows that A thinks kindergarten teachers have a high social status. She also thinks that this job is very easy and that working in a kindergarten has a good working environment and easy interpersonal relationships.

"Since I was a child, I have always thought that kindergarten teachers do a very great job. Teachers not only have to teach children culture and knowledge but also have to take care of the children's daily lives, which is not easy and deserves everyone's respect. And I think working in kindergarten will be very happy, because every day with children, there are no complex interpersonal relationships." (J. -D. Zhang, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

After becoming a kindergarten teacher, A found the job was not easy. On the contrary, the job is very tiring, and often work overtime.

"Now I feel that being a kindergarten teacher is not so easy. At school, I have to teach children culture lessons, but also teach children singing and dancing, I also have to take care of children's daily lives. I used to think that there would be other teachers to share with me, not very tired, the fact is that there are only three kindergarten teachers in a class, but there are more than 30 students, it is not able to help." (J. -D. Zhang, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

Reasons for A who wants to quit are as follows:

Firstly, A believes that school leaders do not pay attention to kindergarten teachers.

“After working for some time, I realized that the leaders seldom paid attention to the work of kindergarten teachers, and very few of them went to listen to classes; in the regular meetings of the teachers, the leaders emphasized more on the safety of the students and seldom touched on the quality of the teachers' teaching. Kindergarten teachers were often pulled out to do things that had nothing to do with teaching, and the school's decision-makers subconsciously assumed that one less class would not affect the students.” (J. -D. Zhang, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

Secondly, A thinks that her working environment is not good, especially the relationship between teachers is not harmonious.

“I was so energized when I first went into the school that I expressed my desire to listen to the experienced teachers and was politely turned down. Later, I proposed to organize teachers to prepare lessons together, which would not only improve the quality of teaching but also strengthen the teachers. However, this offer was rejected. Some teachers privately complained that I like to perform blindly, and said that do not let them work, they want to rest.” (J. -D. Zhang, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

Thirdly, A thinks her salary is too low to support herself.

“I know that as a kindergarten teacher, the pay is low, but I don't expect it to be so low. I only get \$2,500 a month, after rent and food, there's not much left.” (J. -D. Zhang, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

Finally, A thinks that working in a kindergarten has little chance of promotion.

If I get the professional title, my salary will be increased, but it takes a long time to get the advanced title. (J. -D. Zhang, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

#### **4.1.2 Wuhan City: B, Experienced (6 -15 years)**

B was born in 1994 in Xiantao City, Hubei Province. He's been working for seven years. He is a boy, his mother is a primary school Chinese teacher and his father is a junior high school math teacher. B's family attaches great importance to his education.

Reasons for B choosing to become a kindergarten teacher as follows:

B is not good at learning, college entrance examination score is too low, had to choose the preschool education major.

“I am not good at learning, and my college entrance examination is very poor, so I finally chose to enroll in the low-score of the preschool education program.” (F. -C. Zhou, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

“Preschool school was the best major I could choose at that time.” (F. -C. Zhou, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

B believes that because of the support of national policies, the early childhood industry has a bright future.

“I think the early childhood industry has a future, because the national policy is tilting towards this industry, and there will be more and more children in the future because of the three-child policy.” (F. -C. Zhou, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

B believes that his dance teacher had a great influence on him when he was in college, and the encouragement he received from his dance teacher increased his self-confidence.

“The competition that made sure I was in dance team training because of the lack of boys at the time became a turning point in my life. Here I met Ms. Luo, who was in charge of the dance rehearsal. When I felt shy and inferior because I didn't do the moves well, she was the one who encouraged me by saying, "Don't feel embarrassed, you haven't taken dance lessons before, and dancing like this is already very impressive, and you're still quite talented in dance." I know Ms. Luo was comforting me, but her words gave me strong confidence, I firmly believe that I have a great talent for dance, learning dance more and more hard, did not think that my dance was better and better, and then participated in a lot of dance competitions, won a variety of awards.” (F. -C. Zhou, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

Before becoming a kindergarten teacher, B believed that only those with a low score in the college entrance examination would choose to become kindergarten teachers, which was a profession with low status, just like a babysitter and low salary. However, B also believed that this job was stable.

“My father and mother are teachers, as long as I did not study well, my father and mother would say: Be careful you won't be able to get into a good university in the future, and you can only go to kindergarten to take care of children. Although I always thought that only people with bad grades would become kindergarten teachers and take care of other people's children, I also thought that this job was very easy and stable, and it was a pretty good job.” (F. -C. Zhou, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

“I used to think kindergarten teachers were babysitters.” (F. -C. Zhou, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

After becoming a kindergarten teacher, B believes that this is a very important and proud job.

“This year, the fourth group of children I taught graduated. When I see them graduate, I feel an inexplicable sense of pride. They are the witnesses of my hard work and the most valuable harvest in my career.” (F. -C. Zhou, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

“I used to think kindergarten teachers were babysitters, now I don't think like that. I think early childhood teaching is an important profession.” (F. -C. Zhou, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

B met very friendly and capable teachers at work, which had a positive impact on him.

“When I first started at the kindergarten where I work now, the school leader assigned me a teacher and let her teach me how to teach the class and how to deal with things that happen to the students. Mrs. Peng was about 40 years old and very kind. She taught me how to teach, how to deal with problems in the classroom, and told me what I had just taught that I had not handled well, and which method of teaching would be more effective. She tried her best to teach me, instead of hiding it. I have a lot of respect for her.” (F. -C. Zhou, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

B thinks he is good at interpersonal relations. He gets along well with other colleagues.

“I am a warm-hearted person who likes to help others. I often do small favors for other colleagues and they all like me very much. I think I'm good with people. Overall, I think the atmosphere where I work is pretty good.” (F. -C. Zhou, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

The reasons B wants to quit are as follows: Firstly, B believes that the status of kindergarten teachers is too low, and the salary is too low, if there are other options, do not become a kindergarten teacher.

“Seriously, it's true that it's not a good choice for boys to be kindergarten teachers, and if possible, try to become college teachers. The people you come into contact with in college are different, the social status is a bit higher, and the pay is a bit better. The kindergarten paycheck is more than enough to support a family, so I still need to work part-time on the weekends and teach kids how to dance. I find it very tiring. If I had another chance, I would study hard, get into a good university, and choose a profession that earns a lot of money.” (F. -C. Zhou, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

Secondly, B thinks that working in a kindergarten has little chance of promotion.

“I would like to quit my job and find a profession that pays me more, but sometimes I wonder if I should stay up and wait for my title to be graded so that my salary will be higher. But it's really hard to improve my profession title.” (F. -C. Zhou, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

#### **4.1.3 Wuhan City: C, Expert (above 15 years)**

C was born in a poor rural family, her mother and father did not have much education. She has been teaching for 21 years. C became a kindergarten teacher through her efforts, and her mother and father were very happy for her because she was the only one in the family who was working for the government.

The reasons for C choosing to be a kindergarten teacher are as follows:

C's parents attach great importance to education, even if they do not have money, borrow money to let C study. Her parents are very supportive of her becoming a kindergarten teacher and are proud of her. C did not learn a preschool education major, but a finance major at the university.

“When I was a kid, my family was really poor. My mom and dad had no earning skills except farming. But my mom and dad firmly believed that education could

change my fate, so even if they borrowed money from others, they wanted me to study.” (D. Shao, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

C's personality is too introverted, so she chose to become a kindergarten teacher.

“But I'm too introverted to deal with people, so I chose to become a kindergarten teacher after graduation.” (D. Shao, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

Before becoming a kindergarten teacher, C thought that the job of a public kindergarten teacher was a secure rice bowl, and the welfare package was very good.

“The job was an iron rice bowl, the benefits were pretty good, and I didn't have to worry about losing my job, so I applied for it.” (D. Shao, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

C thought the job of a kindergarten teacher was very stable and easy.

“I used to think that kindergarten teachers had an easy job, coming in and out of work on time every day, and it was very stable.” (D. Shao, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

After becoming a kindergarten teacher, C believes that children's parents do not respect teachers from the bottom of their hearts, thinking that teachers are babysitters.

“In the parent-teacher conference, no one cared about my teaching philosophy or the quality of my teaching, parents blamed the teacher for why their children did not have enough food, why their children drank less water, and why their children had injuries. That time, I realized that although the parents were polite to kindergarten teachers, they did not respect them from the bottom of their hearts; they felt that the kindergarten teachers were just babysitters, taking care of their children.” (D. Shao, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

C believes that many of her colleagues are irresponsible and the working environment is not good.

“Many of my colleagues treat their work irresponsibly. They think that the kindergarten curriculum is so simple that they don't need to prepare lessons in advance and just do whatever they want.” (D. Shao, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

Ms. Li has had a great influence on March. Under the influence of this teacher, C straightened up her work attitude and worked very seriously.

“Ms. Li believes that the job of a kindergarten teacher is very important because the students are like a blank sheet of paper and the teacher is the one who draws on the paper, so Ms. Li takes the job very seriously. She would prepare her lessons in advance and look for easy-to-understand teaching methods on the Internet. To improve her teaching level faster, she also actively participated in open classes. After class, she would play games and sing songs with her students and do her best to take care of them. Her serious working attitude infected me, and I began to take my work as seriously as she did.” (D. Shao, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

Because of their improved ability, C won the respect of leaders, colleagues, and parents. It is also loved by students.

“Slowly, I found that my teaching ability was getting stronger and stronger, my leaders and colleagues respected me more and more, my students liked me more and more, my parents respected me more and more, and I was often praised by my leaders.” (D. Shao, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

C found that the newly hired teachers were paid very little and had a huge workload.

“When I first started working, I wanted to quit every day because the salary was really low and the workload was huge.” (D. Shao, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

C loves her job and is proud to be a kindergarten teacher.

“I love my job and I am proud of it.” (D. Shao, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

Reasons for C not quitting: C has worked for 21 years and has been awarded a senior title, which means March's salary is high and other teachers respect her.

“Now I don't want to quit. I'll work until I retire. Because I have been awarded the highest professional title, is a professor-level figure, all the teachers respect me, and my salary is quite high.” (D. Shao, personal communication, November 26, 2023)

#### **4.1.4 Jingmen City: D, Novice (0-5 years)**

D is an outsider working in Hubei province and she is from Hunan province. She has been working for two years. Although she loves Hubei, she wants to return to Hunan to teach and be closer to her mom and dad. D grew up in a family with good economic conditions. D's dad is a civil servant and her mom is a kindergarten teacher and they love her very much.

The reasons for D choosing to be a kindergarten teacher are as follows:

Parents had a major impact on D's career choice. Since D's mother is a kindergarten teacher, D has wanted to be a kindergarten teacher since she was a child.

“Because my mom was a kindergarten teacher, I fantasized about this career. And I think I'm lively and cheerful, which makes me a good kindergarten teacher.” (Q. -X. Wang, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

National policies have had a certain impact on D's career choice. April believes that because of the national policy tilt in the early childhood education industry, it will have a bright future.

“Moreover, the state has enacted many policies that are beneficial to the development of the early childhood education industry, and I think the industry has a future.” (Q. -X. Wang, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

Before becoming a kindergarten teacher, D believed that the job of kindergarten teachers was very simple and happy, just take care of children, there was no skill.

“I think kindergarten teaching is an easy job, kindergarten teachers just take care of the children, the job is very simple, and does not require any skills. I can stay with children every day and be happy every day.” (Q. -X. Wang, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

D believed that kindergarten teachers were well paid and their jobs were stable.

“The salary is also good and the work is stable.” (Q. -X. Wang, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

After becoming a kindergarten teacher, D finds that kindergarten teachers need professional knowledge and skills, and the workload is heavy and tiring.

“I majored in preschool education in college. I didn't realize how much I needed to learn for this major. I used to think that kindergarten teachers were easy, just taking care of kids, but that completely changed when I went into a kindergarten internship. In a public kindergarten, three teachers need to take care of more than 30 children, not only to teach, but also to take care of the children's food and drink, and sometimes they need to work overtime to do the environmental creation, which is too tiring.” (Q. -X. Wang, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

“As kindergarten teachers, we will be the first teacher in a child's life, so we not only need to have patience, love, and responsibility, but also need to have professional skills.” (Q. -X. Wang, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

D believes that the job of kindergarten teachers is not easy, and it is not easy to teach simple knowledge to students in a simpler way.

“I used to think it was easy to teach children, but I found it hard when I taught them. The knowledge that the child learns is very simple originally, you need to use simpler methods to teach a child, and this has been difficult for me.” (Q. -X. Wang, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

D thinks that her students love her very much, and their parents respect her very much.

“The only thing that makes me happy about working here is that my kids love me and their mom and dad respect me. When they learned that I was from Hunan province, the children's moms and dads even invited me to their home for dinner, fearing that I would feel lonely. Although I refused the parents' kindness, I really appreciated it.” (Q. -X. Wang, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

D thinks that kindergarten teachers are poorly paid and have a lot of work to do.

“I say that this kindergarten is low-paying, has a heavy workload, and is far away from my home, and I want to quit.” (Q. -X. Wang, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

Reasons for D wanting to change her job:

D thinks that her workplace is too far away from her home, and she could only go home twice a year, she wanted to find a job close to home.

“I was happy at first, but I'm now more and more tempted to leave my job and go back to Hunan. Because the workplace is in Jingmen, which is a small city and too

far away from my home, I can only go home during winter and summer vacations a year, and I don't have any friends here, so I'd like to leave my job and take a new test for a public kindergarten in Hunan.” (Q. -X. Wang, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

D doesn't like the present working environment. Her colleagues don't get along well with each other.

“I don't like my current work environment. The old teachers here were not very friendly to me. When I first came here, I asked a teacher for help with a teaching problem and he just said he didn't know and refused to help me. Then I asked another teacher for help and this teacher also refused to help me. I ended up looking up the solution online. I thought I was the only one being treated this way, but then I realized that the veteran teachers at this school treat all the new teachers the same way, they don't go out of their way to target us, but they don't offer us help either. The whole atmosphere of the school is bad.” (Q. -X. Wang, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

#### **4.1.5 Jingmen City: E, Experienced (6-15 years)**

E was born in a small village in Jingmen City, Hubei Province. She has been working for nine years.

The reasons for E choosing to be a kindergarten teacher are as follows:

E believes that the homeroom teacher has had an important influence on her career choice. At the suggestion of her homeroom teacher, E chose to major in preschool education.

“My homeroom teacher gave me advice and let me choose the preschool education major. He felt that many undergraduates were reluctant to specialize in the early childhood education industry after graduation, which was less stressful for me,

easier to find a job, and more stable.” (H. Li, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

E thinks she likes children very much and is suitable to be a kindergarten teacher.

“I love children very much and I am suitable to be a kindergarten teacher.” (H. Li, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

Parents are very supportive of E becoming a kindergarten teacher.

“My mom and dad supported me in choosing the preschool education major. My mom and dad thought that it was a stable job and an easy job.” (H. Li, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

Before becoming a kindergarten teacher, E found the job easy and did not require professional knowledge or skills.

“I used to think that everyone could become a kindergarten teacher without the need to systematically learn specialized knowledge skills, but the opposite is true.” (H. Li, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

E thought the job of a kindergarten teacher was stable and relaxed.

“I think this job is very stable, very free, I will have a lot of time to do what I like.” (H. Li, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

After becoming a kindergarten teacher, E liked her job as a kindergarten teacher at first, but after six months, she hated it because it was tiring and noisy. Now E is enjoying her job very much.

“At the beginning, I loved the job. After six months, I started to hate this job. I think this job is to be a babysitter for children, very annoying. But as my working

years grew, I gradually fell in love with my job. Kindergarten teaching is a profession that not everyone can do well, and it is a profession that deserves respect.” (H. Li, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

E believes that kindergarten teachers are not only poorly paid but also have a huge workload and are super tired. Wages are out of proportion to the amount of work.

“Actually, the work of kindergarten teachers is tiring and hard, and the pay is still low, so it is not worth it. You will realize it when you enter kindergarten yourself. I love children, otherwise I wouldn't have lasted.” (H. Li, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

E met an excellent teacher at work, and this teacher had a positive influence on E. E regards her as a role model, people seriously get the job done, which invisibly strengthens E's professional identity.

“I met a very good kindergarten teacher at work. She is very personable and loved by both her students and coworkers. She is very good at teaching, and I have had the honor of listening to her open class, which is very attractive. And every time the city organizes an open class competition, she wins an award. I used to think that anyone could become a kindergarten teacher because there is no skill in this profession. At that time, I realized I was wrong. Since then, I took her as an example and firmly thought of becoming a good kindergarten teacher.” (H. Li, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

Reasons for E wanting to change her job:

E feels that there is no passion in work, and everyday life is the same, very boring.

“I'm bored with my current job, it's the same thing every day, it's not helping to improve my teaching skills, and I feel like I'm walking into a dead end.” (H. Li, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

#### 4.1.6 Jingmen City: F, Expert (Over 15 years)

F is a local of Jingmen and has been working for eighteen years. She entered the early childhood education industry completely by accident. F couldn't find a suitable job after giving birth, so she became a kindergarten teacher by reading the recruitment information of the local kindergarten.

The reasons for F choosing to be a kindergarten teacher are as follows:

After giving birth, F could not find a suitable job and happened to see the local kindergarten in the recruitment of kindergarten teachers. F thought the job of kindergarten teacher was easy and she had a lot of time. She could earn money and have time to take care of her children, so F applied for the job.

F loved children very much and thought that preschool teaching was a very noble profession.

“I didn't major in preschool education in college. The job I did after college was also a million miles away from teaching. But I love children, I think kindergarten teachers are noble and pure and play an important role in our country. Only if kindergarten teachers are professional enough, preschool education will develop healthily.” (Y. -X. Zhou, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

Before becoming a kindergarten teacher, F found the kindergarten teacher's job easy and had a lot of time to herself.

“The kindergarten teacher's job is easy and I have a lot of time to myself, so I can earn money and have time to take care of my children.” (Y. -X. Zhou, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

F feels that the work of kindergarten teachers was easy and there was no pressure.

“I used to be a student and would not have any pressure and very easy.” (Y. -X. Zhou, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

After becoming a kindergarten teacher, F feels the work is not easy, the workload is very large.

“I used to think that kindergarten work was easy, but when I became a kindergarten teacher, I realized that kindergarten work was really a lot, overtime work was common, and the workload was not proportional to the salary.” (Y. -X. Zhou, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

F feels a lot of pressure every day, and it is not easy at all.

“I used to be a student and would not have any pressure. Now that I've become a teacher, I feel a lot of pressure. I'm afraid that I won't be able to teach well, and I'm afraid that children's parents won't like me, so I have a lot of mental pressure every day.” (Y. -X. Zhou, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

F feels that the working environment is not good and the salary is low.

“I find that many of my colleagues around me like to complain about the poor external environment of kindergartens, the lack of attention from the leaders, the lack of respect from parents to teachers, the low salary, and so on, and use this as a reason to slack off in their work.” (Y. -X. Zhou, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

F thinks that the relationship between colleagues is not good, colleagues don't like her. She was disliked by her colleagues because of her active and hard work.

“As I carefully polished every lesson I taught, my lessons became more and more popular with the students, which put pressure on other teachers. The other teachers disliked me and joined forces to ostracize me, but I never changed my work attitude.

As I kept my serious working attitude all year round, this spirit gradually touched many colleagues, who began to admire and respect me from the bottom of their hearts, and the school leaders also recognized me.” (Y. -X. Zhou, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

F loves children very much and wants to be a good teacher.

“I love interacting with children because their innocence and childish words are so healing to my heart. I also enjoy teaching children, and I hope they learn something in my classroom. If you love your children, you will make a good kindergarten teacher.” (Y. -X. Zhou, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

Reasons for F not quitting: F feels that her work is very happy, the salary is high, and her parents respect her.

“I am not going to quit my job. Because I'm getting a good paycheck and my job is easy, both parents and teachers respect me and I'm happy working every day.” (Y. -X. Zhou, personal communication, November 27, 2023)

#### **4.1.7 Qianjiang City: G, Novice (0-5 years)**

G was born in 1998 to an ordinary family in Qianjiang City, Hubei Province. He has four years of working experience. His parents were farmers and did not receive an education, so they did not pay much attention to G's education. Instead, they thought that when G graduated from high school, he would go out to work in society and then get married and have children. But G thought otherwise.

The reasons for G choosing to be a kindergarten teacher are as follows:

G believes that because of the support of national policies, the preschool education major has a bright future.

“I chose preschool education because I think it has a bright future. With the opening of the three-child policy, there are more and more children born, coupled with the state issuing a lot of policies, which will promote the development of the early childhood education industry.” (B. -J. Ruan, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

G's music teacher had a positive influence on him and made G want to be an excellent kindergarten teacher.

“When I first entered college, I was confused because it was widely believed that anyone could be a kindergarten teacher and that it was not necessary to go to college for four years to become a kindergarten teacher. This was changed by my voice teacher, who made me realize that not everyone can be a good kindergarten teacher and that it is important to learn professional skills to be a good kindergarten teacher. For example, my voice teacher, Mr. Li, teaches children's songs, but he can make them lively and interesting. I hope I can be as good a teacher as he is.” (B. -J. Ruan, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

Before becoming a kindergarten teacher, G thought it was a very easy job, a very promising job.

“I used to think that kindergarten teachers were an easy job, a promising job.” (B. -J. Ruan, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

After becoming a kindergarten teacher, G felt that the job of a kindergarten teacher was very tiring.

“I thought I would be happy to be a kindergarten teacher and spend time with cute children every day, but the reality is that I need to wash the children's clothes and feed them, which is so different from what I thought before.” (B. -J. Ruan, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

G believes that kindergarten teachers need not only to master professional knowledge and skills but also to have good communication skills.

“I don't think kindergarten teachers are just anyone. Kindergarten teachers not only need to have high professional skills, such as singing and dancing but also need to have professional knowledge. At the same time, they also need to have high emotional intelligence and be able to handle the relationship with their parents well. Especially if two children are fighting, the kindergarten teacher has to communicate with both parents at the same time, which tests the teacher's ability.” (B. -J. Ruan, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

G's working ability has been recognized by leaders and colleagues.

“I have been recognized by my leaders and colleagues through my efforts. I will now purposefully study something and figure out what things I lack. For example, to make it easier for students to understand dozens plus several, through the Internet, I have found a variety of methods of explaining, then I have carefully watched every video to find out the most suitable method. I would also invite Mrs. Zhang to listen to my class and ask her to point out the problems and then I would correct them. I try my best to do well in every lesson, which helps me improve my teaching skills.” (B. -J. Ruan, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

“In these four years, I have won many awards and I have become somewhat of a teacher in other people's mouths. Last month, I won the first prize in the Open Class Competition for Teachers organized by our school, I was really happy and felt that all my efforts were worthwhile.” (B. -J. Ruan, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

G believes that kindergarten teachers' salaries are low and not proportional to their workload.

“As I have only been in the job for four years, even though I'm underpaid and have a huge workload, I have no intention of leaving the job.” (B. -J. Ruan, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

Reasons for G not quitting: G is optimistic about the preschool education industry and his career promotion.

“I want to take a kindergarten refresher course to enhance my professionalism and deepen my expertise in the field of kindergarten education. Then I want to obtain a high-level education certificate to prepare for future promotions.” (B. -J. Ruan, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

#### **4.1.8 Qianjiang City: H, Experienced (6-15 years)**

H was born in a small town in Qianjiang City. She is currently working in a local public kindergarten and has twelve years of experience.

Reasons for H choosing to be a kindergarten teacher as follows:

H thought she would be a good fit for kindergarten teaching because of her outgoing personality and love of children.

“I love children, plus my personality is very lively and cute.” (X. -R. Wu, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

Support from parents, H's parents think H is suitable to be a kindergarten teacher.

“My parents think I am very suitable to be a kindergarten teacher, that's what I thought.” (X. -R. Wu, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

Supported by national policies, H saw a bright future for the early childhood industry.

“And the state has enacted a lot of policies favorable to the development of the early childhood industry, I think this industry has a promising future.” (X. -R. Wu, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

Before becoming a kindergarten teacher, H thought kindergarten work was a very respectable job and had a high social.

“I used to think that being a kindergarten teacher was a job with high social status and respect. The parents of the students would respect me very much and the rest of the society would respect me very much.” (X. -R. Wu, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

H thought kindergarten teacher was an easy and happy job.

“I also think the job is very easy, just playing with the children every day, I think it is a happy job.” (X. -R. Wu, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

After becoming a kindergarten teacher, H thinks many students' parents don't respect teachers, they treat teachers as babysitters to take care of their children.

“I used to think kindergarten teachers were respected, but they're not. Many parents don't respect teachers at all. Most parents think that kindergarten teachers are just people who take care of their children, and they think that it is enough for their children to have fun in kindergarten, and that they do not need to learn any cultural knowledge. However, when parents realize that their children are not learning as much culture as other children, they complain about the teachers, which makes me feel bad.” (X. -R. Wu, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

H believes that kindergarten teachers need professional knowledge and skills to teach children.

“I also think kindergarten teaching is an unskilled job that anyone can do. There are many skills that kindergarten teachers need to master.” (X. -R. Wu, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

H feels that the salary is too low and not proportional to the workload.

“Kindergarten teachers are paid very low, the workload is large, always work overtime, I feel super tired, and feel that they make cheap labor.” (X. -R. Wu, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

H feels satisfied that the children love her very much.

“Once, the city held an open class competition for outstanding kindergarten teachers, and our school needed to send a teacher. Our director asked the children whose class they liked the most, and the children answered without hesitation: I liked Teacher H's class the most. The students' answers directly warmed my heart. The director finally recommended me to participate in the open class competition, and I lived up to my expectations and won the first prize. I feel like I'm getting what I paid for.” (X. -R. Wu, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

H works very hard. The children like her class very much, which lets her feel a sense of fulfillment.

“I prepare for every lesson in advance and lead students to play different games to make them happy. I always encourage students to speak out their answers bravely, even if the answer is wrong. I don't criticize students casually. Every time I see my students actively participate in the class, I feel a sense of fulfillment.” (X. -R. Wu, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

Reasons for H wanting to change her job: H thinks that her chances of promotion is slim and that she has lost his purpose.

“I wanted to quit because I felt that my chances of getting a promotion were slim, and I was tired of the job, mostly because I had lost my purpose, and I didn't know what it meant to be doing it.” (X. -R. Wu, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

#### **4.1.9 Qianjiang City: J, Expert (over 15 years)**

J was born in Qianjiang City and is currently working in one of the best public kindergartens in Qianjiang City for twenty-four years. She didn't major in preschool education in college but in management. After college, she worked as a clerk for one year and then quit to become a kindergarten teacher.

Reasons for J choosing to be a kindergarten teacher:

J thought she was introverted, not suitable for dealing with adults, and more suitable for children to get along.

“Because I thought my personality was too introverted and I didn't like dealing with people, I thought adults were too complicated. I like to communicate with children because they are simple and cute.” (Q. -R. Ma, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

Before becoming a kindergarten teacher, J thought that kindergarten teacher was an easy job.

“I used to think that being a kindergarten teacher was a very easy job, anyone could do it, did not need professional skills and knowledge, and could take care of children.” (Q. -R. Ma, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

J believes that kindergarten teachers have simple interpersonal relationships and do not have to deal with complicated interpersonal relationships.

“I thought the interpersonal relationship in kindergarten was simple, and I got along with the children every day without intrigue.” (Q. -R. Ma, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

J believed that kindergarten teachers were well paid, had high social status, and were respected.

“I used to think kindergarten teachers had high social status and were respected and well-paid.” (Q. -R. Ma, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

After becoming a kindergarten teacher, J believes that parents treat teachers as babysitters from the bottom of their hearts and do not respect teachers.

“Parents regard kindergarten teachers as babysitters, parents do not respect teachers at all, tell teachers what to do, and let teachers do this and that. Instead of letting teachers teach students knowledge, parents prefer to let teachers take care of their children's daily lives.” (Q. -R. Ma, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

J thinks kindergarten is a lot of work and annoying.

“The kindergarten needs to do the environment creation every month, need to decorate classrooms beautifully, which is very headache for me.” (Q. -R. Ma, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

J believes that not everyone can be qualified for the job of kindergarten teacher, it needs professional knowledge and skills.

“But as my working years grew, I gradually fell in love with my job. Kindergarten teaching is a profession that not everyone can do well, and it is a profession that deserves respect.” (Q. -R. Ma, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

J's work ability was appreciated by the leadership, which strengthened her determination to become an excellent kindergarten teacher.

“I led students to participate in the dance competition won the second prize, I got the kindergarten director and other teachers praised, which greatly enhanced my self-confidence, and strengthened my determination to become a kindergarten teacher.” (Q. -R. Ma, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

Reasons for J not quitting: J likes her current life condition very much. Not only is the salary high, but also colleagues, parents respect her, and students like her.

“I'm not going to change my job. I have become an expert teacher through 24 years of hard work. Now my salary is higher, my colleagues and parents respect me, and my students like me. I think everything is good right now, I like the way life is right now.” (Q. -R. Ma, personal communication, November 28, 2023)

## **4.2 Analyzing of the Influencing Factors of Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Identity**

The main purpose of this study is to identify the influencing factors of kindergarten teachers' professional identity. In the process of reviewing the textual data, it was found that there were some contents that were far away from the main purpose of the study. To focus on the issue under study, we first deleted the statements that were irrelevant or far away from the main purpose of the study and kept the information of the relevant statements.

In this study, the grounded theory was used to code the data. Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain that grounded theory procedures consist of three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The following table shows the coding process:

Table 4.1 Interview Data from Open Coding to Axial Coding to Selective Coding

| Kindergarten teachers | Open coding                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Axial coding                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Selective coding                                                                                  |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A                     | <p>(16 Units of Thought)</p> <p>1) Reasons for entering this job (4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Interest in young children at a young age</li> <li>-Supported by parents</li> <li>-Have patience, love, and responsibility</li> <li>-Suitable for the job of kindergarten teacher</li> </ul> <p>2)Thought about this job (Before) (5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A stable job</li> <li>-An easy to job</li> <li>-A great job</li> <li>-A happy job</li> <li>-Sample interpersonal relationships</li> </ul> <p>3)Think about this job (now) (6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Hard work</li> <li>-Need professional skills</li> <li>-A job worthy of others' respect</li> <li>-Bad work environment</li> <li>-Low salary</li> <li>-Proud of this job</li> </ul> <p>4)Decision on whether to leave the job (1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Want to quit</li> </ul> | <p>1) Personality</p> <p>2) Self-perception</p> <p>3) Significant others</p> <p>4) Professional skills</p> <p>5) Work environment</p> <p>6) welfare enjoyment</p> <p>7) The feeling about this job</p> <p>8) Social status</p> <p>9) Ability to deal with colleagues</p> | <p>1) Self-image</p> <p>2) Self -efficacy</p> <p>3) Job satisfaction</p> <p>4) Social support</p> |
| B                     | <p>(21 Units of Thought)</p> <p>1)Reasons for entering this job (4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Because of the low-score</li> <li>-Nation policy</li> <li>-The three-child policy</li> <li>-Influenced by the dance teacher</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p>1)Nation policy</p> <p>2)Significant others</p> <p>3)Social status</p> <p>4)welfare enjoyment</p> <p>Professional skills</p>                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                   |

Table 4.1 Interview Data from Open Coding to Axial Coding to Selective Coding (Cont.)

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |  |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|   | <p>2)Thought about this job (Before) (7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Low pay</li> <li>-Low Social status</li> <li>-A babysitter</li> <li>-A stable job</li> <li>-An easy job</li> <li>-A pretty job</li> <li>-Need to improve professional skills</li> </ul> <p>3) Think about this job (now) (10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A job worthy of respect</li> <li>-Low pay</li> <li>-Tiring work</li> <li>-Love this job</li> <li>-Proud of this job</li> <li>-Good work environment</li> <li>-Good relationship with colleagues</li> <li>-An important job</li> <li>-Need to improve professional skills</li> <li>-Low social status</li> </ul> <p>4) Decision on whether to leave the job (1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Want to quit</li> </ul> | <p>5)Work environment</p> <p>6)The feeling about this job</p> <p>7) Ability to deal with colleagues</p>                                                                                              |  |
| C | <p>(19 Units of Thought)</p> <p>1)Reasons for entering this job (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Her personality was too introverted</li> <li>-Supported by parents</li> </ul> <p>2)Thought about this job (Before) (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A stable job</li> <li>-Good pay</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <p>1) Personality</p> <p>2) Significant others</p> <p>3) Professional skills</p> <p>4) Work environment</p> <p>5) welfare enjoyment</p> <p>6) The feeling about this job</p> <p>7) Social status</p> |  |

Table 4.1 Interview Data from Open Coding to Axial Coding to Selective Coding (Cont.)

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |  |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|   | <p>-An easy job</p> <p>3)Thought about this job (Before becoming an expert) (7)</p> <p>-Bad work environment</p> <p>-Disrespected by parents</p> <p>-Colleagues work irresponsibly</p> <p>- Improve her professional skills</p> <p>-Serious working attitude</p> <p>-Low salary,</p> <p>-Heavy workload</p> <p>4)Think about this job (After becoming an expert) (6)</p> <p>- Good salary</p> <p>- Respected by parents</p> <p>-Respected by colleagues</p> <p>-Proud of this job</p> <p>-Love this job</p> <p>-Strong professional skills</p> <p>5)Decision on whether to leave the job (1)</p> <p>-No planning to quit</p> | <p>8) Ability to deal with colleagues</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |  |
| D | <p>(21 Units of Thought)</p> <p>1)Reasons for entering this job (3)</p> <p>-Supported by parents</p> <p>- Lively and cheerful</p> <p>-Nation policy</p> <p>2)Thought about this job (Before) (5)</p> <p>-An easy job</p> <p>-A happy job</p> <p>-Good salary</p> <p>-A stable job</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>1) Personality</p> <p>2) Significant others</p> <p>3) Nation policy</p> <p>4) Professional skills</p> <p>5) Work environment</p> <p>6) welfare enjoyment</p> <p>7) The feeling about this job</p> <p>8) Social status</p> <p>9) Ability to deal with colleagues</p> |  |

Table 4.1 Interview Data from Open Coding to Axial Coding to Selective Coding (Cont.)

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Think professional skills unimportant</li> </ul> <p>3)Think about this job (now) (12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Tiring work</li> <li>-Hard work</li> <li>-work overtime</li> <li>-Heavy workload</li> <li>-Unfriendly colleagues</li> <li>-Bad work atmosphere</li> <li>-Low salary</li> <li>-Loved by children</li> <li>-Respected by parents</li> <li>-Good relationship with parents</li> <li>-Need professional skills</li> <li>-Need to have patience, love and responsibility</li> </ul> <p>4)Decision on whether to leave the job (1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Want to quit</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |
| E | <p>(22 Units of Thought)</p> <p>1)Reasons for entering this job (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Love children</li> <li>-Supported by teachers</li> <li>-Supported by parents</li> </ul> <p>2)Thought about this job (Before) (7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A babysitter</li> <li>-Very annoying</li> <li>-Think professional skills unimportant</li> <li>-A stable job</li> <li>-An easy job</li> <li>-Good salary</li> <li>-Sample interpersonal relationships</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1)Personality</li> <li>2)Significant others</li> <li>3)Nation policy</li> <li>4)Professional skills and knowledge</li> <li>5) Work environment</li> <li>6) welfare enjoyment</li> <li>7) The feeling about this job</li> <li>8) Social status</li> <li>9) Working ability</li> <li>10) Opportunity for promotion</li> </ul> |  |

Table 4.1 Interview Data from Open Coding to Axial Coding to Selective Coding (Cont.)

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |  |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|   | <p>3)Think about this job (now) (11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Love this job</li> <li>-Need professional knowledge and skills</li> <li>-A job worthy of others' respect</li> <li>-Low salary</li> <li>-Work overtime</li> <li>-Tiring work</li> <li>-Hard work</li> <li>-Boring work</li> <li>-Love children</li> <li>-No promotions available</li> <li>-Improve working ability</li> </ul> <p>4)Decision on whether to leave the job (1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Want to quit</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |  |
| F | <p>(23 Units of Thought)</p> <p>1)Reasons for entering this job (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Love children</li> <li>-Suitable for the job of kindergarten teacher</li> <li>-Consider kindergarten teachers very important</li> </ul> <p>2)Thought about this job (Before) (5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-An easy to job</li> <li>-A great job</li> <li>-No pressure</li> <li>-have a lot of free time</li> <li>-Sample interpersonal relationships</li> </ul> <p>3)Thought about this job (Before becoming an expert) (8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Bad relationship with colleagues</li> <li>-Low salary</li> </ul> | <p>1)Personality</p> <p>2)Self-perception</p> <p>3)Working ability</p> <p>4) Work environment</p> <p>5) welfare enjoyment</p> <p>6) The feeling about this job</p> <p>7) Social status</p> <p>8) Ability to deal with colleagues</p> |  |

Table 4.1 Interview Data from Open Coding to Axial Coding to Selective Coding (Cont.)

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |  |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A lot of pressure</li> <li>-Work overtime</li> <li>-The lack of attention from the leaders</li> <li>-Disrespect by parents</li> <li>-Improve working ability</li> <li>-Loving teaching</li> </ul> <p>4)Think about this job (After becoming an expert ) (6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Good relationship with colleagues</li> <li>-Good salary</li> <li>-Respected by parents</li> <li>-Respected by colleagues</li> <li>-An easy job</li> <li>-A happy work</li> </ul> <p>5) Decision on whether to leave the job (1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-No planning to quit</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |  |
| G | <p>(16 Units of Thought)</p> <p>1)Reasons for entering this job (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Love children</li> <li>-Influenced by the voice teacher</li> </ul> <p>2)Thought about this job (Before) (6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A stable job</li> <li>-An easy to job</li> <li>-A lot of free time</li> <li>-A happy job</li> <li>-A promising job</li> <li>-No professional skills</li> </ul> <p>3)Think about this job (now) (7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Hard work</li> </ul>                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1)Personality</li> <li>2)Significant others</li> <li>3)Professional skills and knowledge</li> <li>4) Work environment</li> <li>5) welfare enjoyment</li> <li>6) Social status</li> <li>7) Working ability</li> <li>8) Teaching ability</li> <li>9) Opportunity for promotion</li> </ul> |  |

Table 4.1 Interview Data from Open Coding to Axial Coding to Selective Coding (Cont.)

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |  |
|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Need professional knowledge and skills</li> <li>-Good communication skill with parents</li> <li>-Improve teaching skills</li> <li>-Strong working ability</li> <li>-Respected by others</li> <li>-Low salary</li> <li>-Want to be promoted in the future</li> </ul> <p>4)Decision on whether to leave the job (1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-No planning to quit</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |  |
| H | <p>(20 Units of Thought)</p> <p>1)Reasons for entering this job (5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Love children</li> <li>-Lively and cute</li> <li>-Supported by parents</li> <li>-Nation policy</li> <li>-suitable to be a kindergarten teacher</li> </ul> <p>2)Thought about this job (Before) (6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A stable job</li> <li>-An easy to job</li> <li>-A respectable job</li> <li>-A happy job</li> <li>-An unskilled job</li> <li>-Sample interpersonal relationships</li> </ul> <p>3)Think about this job (now) (8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Disrespected job</li> <li>-Heavy workload</li> <li>-Need professional skills</li> <li>-Low salary</li> <li>-Working overtime</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Personality</li> <li>2) Significant others</li> <li>3) Nation policy</li> <li>4) Self-perception</li> <li>5) Professional skills and knowledge</li> <li>6) Work environment</li> <li>7) welfare enjoyment</li> <li>8) Social status</li> <li>9) Opportunity for promotion</li> </ul> |  |

Table 4.1 Interview Data from Open Coding to Axial Coding to Selective Coding (Cont.)

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |  |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Loved by children</li> <li>-A sense of fulfillment of this job</li> <li>-Little chance of promotion</li> </ul> <p>4)Decision on whether to leave the job (1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Want to quit</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |  |
| J | <p>(21 Units of Thought)</p> <p>1)Reasons for entering this job (4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Her personality was too introverted</li> <li>-Love children</li> <li>-Have patience, love, and responsibility</li> <li>-Suitable for the job of kindergarten teacher</li> </ul> <p>2)Thought about this job (Before) (6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-An easy job</li> <li>-Good pay</li> <li>-Sample interpersonal relationships</li> <li>- High social status</li> <li>- Respected by others</li> </ul> <p>3)Thought about this job (Before becoming an expert) (5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Tiring job</li> <li>-Work overtime</li> <li>-Low salary</li> <li>-Heavy workload</li> <li>- Need professional knowledge and skills</li> </ul> <p>4)Think about this job (After becoming an expert) (5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Good salary</li> </ul> | <p>1)Personality</p> <p>2)Self-perception</p> <p>3)Professional skills and knowledge</p> <p>4) Work environment</p> <p>5) welfare enjoyment</p> <p>6) Social status</p> <p>7) The feeling of this job</p> <p>8) Ability to deal with colleagues</p> |  |

Table 4.1 Interview Data from Open Coding to Axial Coding to Selective Coding (Cont.)

|  |                                                                                                                                                                         |  |  |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|
|  | -Respected by parents<br>-Respected by colleagues<br>-Loved by children<br>-Proud of this job<br><br>5)Decision on whether to leave the job (1)<br>-No planning to quit |  |  |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|

Table 4.1 shows that there are four influencing factors of kindergarten teachers' professional identity, which are self-image, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and social support

### 4.3 Analyzing the Relationship Between the Influencing Factors and Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Identity

This study analyzes the intrinsic structure and effectiveness of scale preparation and uses exploratory factor analysis to reveal the interrelationships between scale items and how these associations reflect underlying structures or concepts. Through analysis, it is possible to identify redundant items in the scale and determine which items are crucial for measuring specific concepts or dimensions, ensuring the structural validity of the questionnaire.

#### 4.3.1 Exploratory Factor Analysis

This section presents three tables that give details about Exploratory Factor Analysis to explore the influencing factors from 33 questionnaire items. In this study, 396 samples were selected for the EFA test, which is deemed moderate and exceeds the recommended guideline of having at least 5-10 times more samples than the number of analysis items.

##### 4.3.1.1 KMO and Bartlett's Test

Before factor analysis, two tests are usually performed: the Bartlett sphericity test and the KMO test. The Bartlett sphericity test is used to determine the correlation between variables. If the test results reject the null hypothesis, it indicates that there is a correlation between variables, which is suitable for factor analysis. If the null hypothesis is accepted, the variables may be independent and not suitable for factor analysis. The KMO test evaluates correlations and partial correlations between variables, with values between 0 and 1. The closer the KMO value is to 1, the stronger the correlation between variables, the weaker the partial correlation, and the better the factor analysis effect. Generally, a KMO value above 0.7 is good; If it is below 0.5, the variable structure may need to be reconsidered or other analytical methods adopted.

In this study, validity was verified using KMO and Bartlett's test, the coefficient result of the KMO test was 0.927, and Bartlett's test chi-square value was 6981.908 (Sig.=0.000<0.01) indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis.

Table 4.2 KMO and Bartlett's Test

| KMO and Bartlett's Test                         |                    |          |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy |                    | 0.927    |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity                   | Approx. Chi-Square | 6981.908 |
|                                                 | df                 | 378      |
|                                                 | Sig.               | <0.001   |

#### 4.3.1.2 Extract Common Factors

Table 4.3 displays the outcomes of factor contribution, specifically the outcomes of principal component extraction. The eigenvalues signify the significance of the common factors and are utilized to elucidate how much information from the original variables can be conveyed after extracting the common factors. The variance contribution rate gauges the relative importance of common factors: the greater the value, the more significant the contribution of common factors. The cumulative contribution rate signifies the amount of original information accumulated after the extraction of the first common factors based on the variance contribution rate (Yong & Pearce, 2013).

Table 4.3 Total Variance Explained

| Total Variance Explained |                     |               |              |                                     |               |              |                                   |               |              |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Factors                  | Initial Eigenvalues |               |              | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings |               |              | Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings |               |              |
|                          | Total               | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total                               | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total                             | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
| 1                        | 10.629              | 44.289        | 44.289       | 10.629                              | 44.289        | 44.289       | 4.639                             | 19.328        | 19.328       |
| 2                        | 2.200               | 9.167         | 53.457       | 2.200                               | 9.167         | 53.457       | 4.235                             | 17.644        | 36.972       |
| 3                        | 1.859               | 7.748         | 61.204       | 1.859                               | 7.748         | 61.204       | 4.053                             | 16.887        | 53.859       |
| 4                        | 1.732               | 7.215         | 68.419       | 1.732                               | 7.215         | 68.419       | 3.495                             | 14.561        | 68.419       |
| 5                        | .683                | 2.844         | 71.263       |                                     |               |              |                                   |               |              |

Table 4.3 presents the findings of the four common factors. The cumulative variance contribution rate of 68.419 from this table indicates that these four common factors effectively expound the original information, with a total information coverage of 68.419 percent, surpassing the 60 percent benchmark.

#### 4.3.1.3 Rotated Component Matrix

In this study, the maximum variance method is used to screen out the factors with eigenvalues exceeding 1, to achieve the reduction and simplification of the original data. In this process, the factor axis is continuously adjusted to ensure that the load of each item on the corresponding factor is maximized, and as far as possible, each item has a significant load on only one factor.

During the rotation process, focus on the correspondence between each item and the factor to ensure that they are consistent with the theoretical assumptions. Through continuous iteration and optimization, a set of factors that not only conform to the actual data distribution but also accurately reflect the theoretical conception are obtained, which ensures the excellent structural validity of the prediction questionnaire.

After preliminary rotation analysis, Self-efficacy 7 factors inconsistent with the overall theoretical conception were eliminated. Then, we continue to explore the factor structure and find that Self-image 8, Job satisfaction 8, and Job satisfaction 7 are

inconsistent with the original theoretical conception. In order to ensure the accuracy of the study and the consistency of the theory, these factors were excluded in the subsequent analysis. A total of four factors were extracted, and the factor of each item was greater than 0.5, and the distribution of factor items was consistent with the theoretical conception. At any time in Table 2, the cumulative contribution rate of the four factors was equal to 68.419%, greater than 60%, indicating that the extracted factors could explain most of the information, as shown in Table 4.6 below.

Self-efficacy 7: Being a kindergarten teacher keeps my childlike innocence forever.

Self-image 8: I often take the initiative to participate in teacher-related lectures, training and other learning opportunities.

Job satisfaction 8: I think kindergarten teachers have more free leisure time.

Job satisfaction 7: No pressure to advance to higher education and stable income are the main reasons why I became a kindergarten teacher.

Table 4.4 Rotated Component Matrix

| Items              | Component |      |   |   |
|--------------------|-----------|------|---|---|
|                    | 1         | 2    | 3 | 4 |
| Self-image 3       | .781      |      |   |   |
| Self-image 1       | .764      |      |   |   |
| Self-image 4       | .758      |      |   |   |
| Self-image 5       | .751      |      |   |   |
| Self-image 7       | .733      |      |   |   |
| Self-image 6       | .722      |      |   |   |
| Self-image 2       | .710      |      |   |   |
| Job satisfaction 4 |           | .794 |   |   |
| Job satisfaction 5 |           | .788 |   |   |
| Job satisfaction 3 |           | .766 |   |   |
| Job satisfaction 2 |           | .764 |   |   |
| Job satisfaction 1 |           | .748 |   |   |
| Job satisfaction 6 |           | .741 |   |   |

Table 4.4 Rotated Component Matrix (Cont.)

|                                                     |  |  |      |      |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--|--|------|------|
| Self-efficacy 2                                     |  |  | .809 |      |
| Self-efficacy 3                                     |  |  | .775 |      |
| Self-efficacy 4                                     |  |  | .772 |      |
| Self-efficacy 5                                     |  |  | .721 |      |
| Self-efficacy 6                                     |  |  | .713 |      |
| Self-efficacy 1                                     |  |  | .673 |      |
| social support5                                     |  |  |      | .847 |
| social support 2                                    |  |  |      | .745 |
| social support 3                                    |  |  |      | .739 |
| social support 4                                    |  |  |      | .726 |
| social support1                                     |  |  |      | .724 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.    |  |  |      |      |
| Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. |  |  |      |      |
| a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.              |  |  |      |      |

Table 4.4 clearly indicates that the factor loadings after rotation range from 0.60 to 0.8, surpassing the standard threshold of 0.6. This signifies that the questionnaire exhibits strong structural validity.

#### 4.3.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis) analyzes the validity of the structure, verifying the fit between the potential structure revealed by factor analysis and the actual theory or conceptual framework, and checking whether the factor structure obtained through factor analysis is consistent with the theory or conceptual framework set in advance.

##### 4.3.2.1 General Information

In this study, a stratified sampling method was used to draw 343 kindergarten teachers from Wuhan City, 38 kindergarten teachers from Jingmen City

and 15 kindergarten teachers from Qianjiang, totaling 396 people. 396 questionnaires were distributed and 396 questionnaires were recovered, with a recovery rate of 100%.

Table 4.5 The Demographic Characteristics of Participants

| Items                           |                         | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| Your gender                     | male                    | 124       | 31.3    | 31.3               |
|                                 | female                  | 272       | 68.7    | 100.0              |
| Your age                        | 20-29                   | 153       | 38.6    | 38.6               |
|                                 | 30-39                   | 129       | 32.6    | 71.2               |
|                                 | 40-49                   | 75        | 18.9    | 90.2               |
|                                 | Above 50                | 39        | 9.8     | 100.0              |
| Your major                      | Preschool education     | 336       | 84.8    | 84.8               |
|                                 | Non-preschool education | 60        | 15.2    | 100.0              |
| Your education background       | Junior college or below | 109       | 27.5    | 27.5               |
|                                 | Bachelor degree         | 226       | 57.1    | 84.6               |
|                                 | Master Degree or above  | 61        | 15.4    | 100.0              |
| Your teaching years             | 0-5 years               | 137       | 34.6    | 34.6               |
|                                 | 6-15 years              | 170       | 42.9    | 77.5               |
|                                 | 16-25 years             | 66        | 16.7    | 94.2               |
|                                 | above 25 years          | 23        | 5.8     | 100.0              |
| Your professional title         | None                    | 121       | 30.6    | 30.6               |
|                                 | Junior                  | 110       | 27.8    | 58.3               |
|                                 | Intermediate            | 79        | 19.9    | 78.3               |
|                                 | advanced                | 86        | 21.7    | 100.0              |
| Your marital status             | single                  | 90        | 22.7    | 22.7               |
|                                 | Married                 | 306       | 77.3    | 100.0              |
| Kindergarten nature of work     | public                  | 284       | 71.7    | 71.7               |
|                                 | Private                 | 112       | 28.3    | 100.0              |
| Your kindergarten is located in | Wuhan                   | 143       | 36.1    | 36.1               |
|                                 | Jingmen                 | 117       | 29.5    | 65.7               |

Table 4.5 The Demographic Characteristics of Participants (Cont.)

|                    |                |     |      |       |
|--------------------|----------------|-----|------|-------|
|                    | Qianjiang City | 136 | 34.3 | 100.0 |
| Your salary (Yuan) | 1000-2000      | 39  | 9.8  | 9.8   |
|                    | 2001-3000      | 58  | 14.6 | 24.5  |
|                    | 3001-4000      | 111 | 28.0 | 52.5  |
|                    | 4001 and above | 188 | 47.5 | 100.0 |

#### 4.3.2.2 Basic Summary of CFA Analysis

Table 4.6 displays the results of the confirmatory factor analysis conducted for four influencing factors comprising 24 items in total. The sample size for this analysis was 396, which is deemed moderate and exceeds the recommended guideline of having at least 5-10 times more samples than the number of analysis items.

Table 4.6 Basic Summary of CFA Analysis

| Basic Summary of CFA Analysis |      |
|-------------------------------|------|
| Factor                        | Item |
| Self-image                    | 7    |
| Self-efficacy                 | 6    |
| Job satisfaction              | 6    |
| Social support                | 5    |
| Total                         | 24   |
| Analyzed sample size          | 396  |

#### 4.3.2.3 Model AVE and CR Indicator Results

Aggregate validity of the scale. Aggregate validity refers to the degree to which a measurement tool is stable and consistent across different sample populations. To evaluate aggregate Validity, we usually calculate the internal consistency coefficient of the scale as well as the Construct Validity measure. In this study, we required CR (Combined Reliability) of aggregation validity to be greater than 0.7, indicating a high internal consistency of the scale. AVE (Average Variance Extracted) was greater than 0.5, indicating that the construct validity of the scale was good.

Table 4.7 Model AVE and CR Indicator Results

| Factors          | Variable | Standardized load coefficient | AVE   | CR    |
|------------------|----------|-------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Self-image       | SI1      | 0.795                         | 0.635 | 0.924 |
|                  | SI2      | 0.817                         |       |       |
|                  | SI3      | 0.790                         |       |       |
|                  | SI4      | 0.812                         |       |       |
|                  | SI5      | 0.821                         |       |       |
|                  | SI6      | 0.758                         |       |       |
|                  | SI7      | 0.780                         |       |       |
| Self-efficacy    | SE1      | 0.809                         | 0.674 | 0.924 |
|                  | SE2      | 0.814                         |       |       |
|                  | SE3      | 0.816                         |       |       |
|                  | SE4      | 0.849                         |       |       |
|                  | SE5      | 0.820                         |       |       |
|                  | SE6      | 0.795                         |       |       |
| Job satisfaction | JS1      | 0.798                         | 0.640 | 0.914 |
|                  | JS2      | 0.772                         |       |       |
|                  | JS3      | 0.824                         |       |       |
|                  | JS4      | 0.815                         |       |       |
|                  | JS5      | 0.782                         |       |       |
|                  | JS6      | 0.809                         |       |       |
| Social support   | SU1      | 0.825                         | 0.649 | 0.902 |
|                  | SU2      | 0.800                         |       |       |
|                  | SU3      | 0.831                         |       |       |
|                  | SU4      | 0.797                         |       |       |
|                  | SU5      | 0.788                         |       |       |

Table 4.7 shows that after in-depth analysis of the aggregate validity of the scale, it is found that the average variance extraction value (AVE) of each factor is more than 0.5, and the combined reliability (CR) is also more than 0.7. These results fully prove that the scale has excellent aggregation validity.

#### 4.3.2.4 Discrimination validity

Discrimination validity refers to the ability of a measurement tool to distinguish between different concepts or different levels. To evaluate the discrimination validity, the comparison of the correlation between the square root of AVE and the factors is usually calculated, and the square root of AVE is greater than the correlation between the factors, indicating that the scale has a good discrimination validity.

Table 4.8 Discrimination Validity of the Scale

| Factors          | Self-image | Self-efficacy | Job satisfaction | Social support |
|------------------|------------|---------------|------------------|----------------|
| Self-image       | 0.797      |               |                  |                |
| Self-efficacy    | 0.422***   | 0.821         |                  |                |
| Job satisfaction | 0.435***   | 0.429***      | 0.800            |                |
| Social support   | 0.389***   | 0.413***      | 0.375***         | 0.806          |

Note: The diagonal line represents the square root of AVE

Table 4.8 shows that by using AVE (mean-variance extraction) to evaluate the correlation between roots and factors, it is found that the square root of AVE is greater than the correlation coefficient between factors. This result shows that the scale used has good discrimination validity.

#### 4.3.2.5 Model fit indices

The fit indices are an index to evaluate the fit degree between the factor analysis model and the actual data. Commonly used fitness indicators include Chi-square (df), Root Mean Squared Residual (RMR), IFI (Index of Fit), TLI (Tuck-Lewis Index), CFI (Comparative Fit Index) and RMSEA (Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation)

Firstly, the Chi-square to Degrees of Freedom Ratio (CMIN/DF) was selected as one of the indicators to evaluate model fitting. This metric evaluates the fit of the model by comparing the ratio between the Chi-square value of the model (which represents the difference between the model and the data) and the degree of freedom

(the number of independently estimated parameters in the model). In general, if the value of CMIN/DF is less than 3, then the model can be considered a good fit.

Secondly, RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) was used to evaluate the fit degree of the model. RMSEA is a residual-based fitting index that represents the average difference between the model and the data. The smaller the value of RMSEA, the better the model fit. In general, a value of RMSEA less than 0.08 indicates a good model fit, and a value less than 0.05 indicates a very good model fit.

Thirdly, RMR (Root Mean Square Residual) represents the square root of the sum of the squares of the residuals of the actual matrix and the model matrix, which can also be regarded as the fitting residual. Therefore, the smaller the RMR, the better, and when it is 0, it means that the actual situation is exactly the same as the matrix in the model, i.e., the model is optimal. Less than 0.05 indicates an acceptable model fit goodness of fit.

Finally, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), TLI (Tuck-Lewis Index) and IFI (Incremental) are also selected Fit Index, etc. These indicators are calculated based on the degree of fit between the model and the data, and the closer their value is to 1, the better the fit of the model. In general, values greater than 0.9 for these indicators indicate a good model fit.

Table 4.9 Model fit indices

| Key index | Adaptation standard | value | Whether it reaches the standard or not |
|-----------|---------------------|-------|----------------------------------------|
| CMIN      | -                   |       |                                        |
| DF        | -                   |       |                                        |
| CMIN/DF   | <5                  | 3.119 | YES                                    |
| RMR       | <0.05               | 0.036 | YES                                    |
| IFI       | >0.09               | 0.924 | YES                                    |
| TLI       | >0.09               | 0.914 | YES                                    |
| CFI       | >0.09               | 0.923 | YES                                    |
| RMSEA     | <0.08               | 0.073 | YES                                    |

Table 4.9 shows that after the evaluation of the fitness index, the results of this study show that the CMIN/DF value is 3.119, which is lower than the recommended threshold of 5. The RMR value was 0.036, lower than the standard of 0.05. The values of IFI, TLI and CFI were 0.924, 0.914 and 0.923 respectively, all exceeding the recommended standard of 0.09. The RMSEA value is 0.073, also below the threshold of 0.08. These indexes all meet the criteria of fit, so it can be concluded that the model has good structural validity.

#### 4.3.2.6 CFA Model

The confirmatory factor analysis was employed to assess the fit of the ideal four-factor model derived from the exploratory factor analysis. Ultimately, a fully standardized solution for the four-factor model of kindergarten teachers' professional identity was obtained. The analysis results are depicted in Figure 4.1.

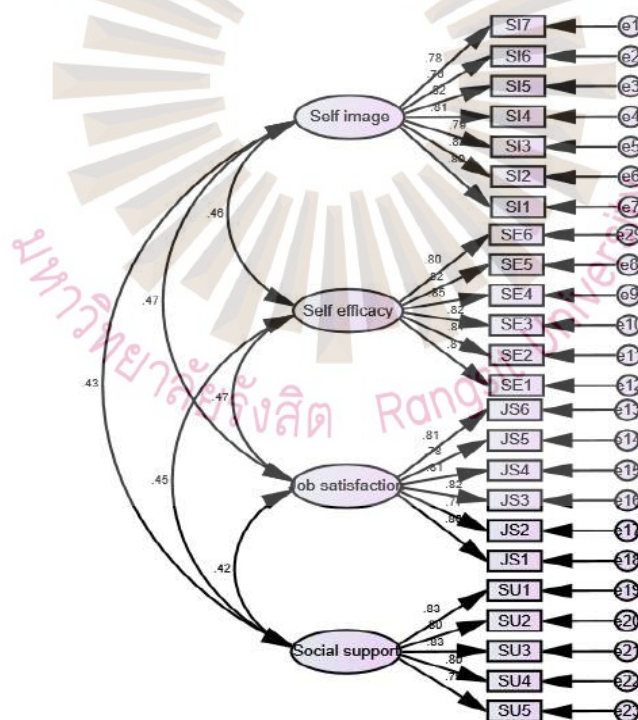


Figure 4.1 CFA Model

Figure 4.1 shows that the model fit indices meet the criteria and the scale has structural validity.

### 4.3.3 Reliability Item Analysis

Through exploratory factor analysis, the kindergarten teachers' professional identity questionnaire was adjusted to a certain extent, and a formal questionnaire was obtained. To further verify the rationality of the kindergarten teachers' professional identity questionnaire and its four-dimensional model, this study will conduct a reliability analysis on the formal questionnaire.

Table 4.10 The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of Each Factor

| Factors          | Numbers | Cronbach's alpha |
|------------------|---------|------------------|
| Self-image       | 7       | 0.922            |
| Self-efficacy    | 6       | 0.919            |
| Job satisfaction | 6       | 0.913            |
| Social support   | 5       | 0.900            |
| Total            | 24      | 0.933            |

The result was calculated by SPSS 26. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each factor are 0.922, 0.919, 0.913, 0.900 and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the total factor is 0.933

### 4.3.4 SEM Analyzing

In the current study, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to analyze the relationships between variables in depth. Structural equation modeling can help us understand the complex relationships between multiple variables and quantify their interactions. Through this approach, the causal relationships between variables can be better understood.

#### 4.3.4.1 Descriptive Statistics

First, in this study, through further analysis of the survey data, there are a total of ten variables for the influencing factors: (1) self-image, (2) self-efficacy, (3) job satisfaction, (4) social support, given the continuity of variables, this article makes the

following statistical description of the selected variables. It can be seen from the result that the value of the variable is in a reasonable range, and the data is close to a normal distribution.

Table 4.11 The Measurement of the Central Tendency of the Latent Variable Structure for The Influencing Factors

| Factors             | Questions | Mean      | Std.<br>Deviation | Skewness  |            | Kurtosis  |            |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                     |           | Statistic | Statistic         | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Std. Error |
| Self-image          | SI1       | 3.225     | 0.879             | -0.072    | 0.123      | -0.243    | 0.245      |
|                     | SI2       | 3.225     | 0.992             | -0.01     | 0.123      | -0.496    | 0.245      |
|                     | SI3       | 3.664     | 0.906             | -0.312    | 0.123      | -0.194    | 0.245      |
|                     | SI4       | 3.76      | 0.95              | -0.36     | 0.123      | -0.386    | 0.245      |
|                     | SI5       | 3.679     | 0.979             | -0.348    | 0.123      | -0.452    | 0.245      |
|                     | SI6       | 3.152     | 0.87              | -0.067    | 0.123      | -0.056    | 0.245      |
|                     | SI7       | 3.343     | 1.122             | -0.199    | 0.123      | -0.781    | 0.245      |
| Self-<br>efficacy   | SE1       | 3.187     | 1.128             | -0.117    | 0.123      | -0.689    | 0.245      |
|                     | SE2       | 3.654     | 0.922             | -0.215    | 0.123      | -0.514    | 0.245      |
|                     | SE3       | 3.854     | 0.885             | -0.37     | 0.123      | -0.499    | 0.245      |
|                     | SE4       | 3.048     | 1.249             | -0.044    | 0.123      | -0.928    | 0.245      |
|                     | SE5       | 3.609     | 0.928             | -0.215    | 0.123      | -0.374    | 0.245      |
|                     | SE6       | 3.563     | 0.894             | -0.245    | 0.123      | -0.3      | 0.245      |
| Job<br>satisfaction | JS1       | 3.255     | 0.905             | -0.031    | 0.123      | -0.113    | 0.245      |
|                     | JS2       | 3.692     | 1.096             | -0.41     | 0.123      | -0.669    | 0.245      |
|                     | JS3       | 3.889     | 0.969             | -0.53     | 0.123      | -0.472    | 0.245      |
|                     | JS4       | 3.391     | 1.096             | -0.162    | 0.123      | -0.64     | 0.245      |
|                     | JS5       | 3.747     | 1.012             | -0.493    | 0.123      | -0.295    | 0.245      |
|                     | JS6       | 3.561     | 1.083             | -0.391    | 0.123      | -0.483    | 0.245      |
| Social<br>support   | SU1       | 3.616     | 0.991             | -0.364    | 0.123      | -0.394    | 0.245      |
|                     | SU2       | 3.369     | 0.999             | -0.194    | 0.123      | -0.537    | 0.245      |
|                     | SU3       | 3.556     | 0.851             | -0.1      | 0.123      | -0.239    | 0.245      |

Table 4.11 The Measurement of the Central Tendency of the Latent Variable Structure for The Influencing Factors (Cont.)

|  |     |       |       |        |       |        |       |
|--|-----|-------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
|  | SU4 | 3.283 | 1.197 | -0.133 | 0.123 | -0.901 | 0.245 |
|  | SU5 | 3.798 | 1.07  | -0.551 | 0.123 | -0.55  | 0.245 |

Second, in this study, further analysis of the survey data identified a total of four variables that constitute the dimensions of kindergarten teachers' professional identity: (1) role value, (2) professional value, (3) professional sense of belonging, and (4) professional behavior tendency. Given the continuous nature of these variables, the following statistical description of the selected variables is provided. The analysis indicates that the values of the variables fall within a reasonable range, and the data approximates a normal distribution. This suggests that the variables are well-distributed and suitable for further analysis.

Table 4.12 The Measurement of the Central Tendency of the Latent Variable Structure for the Dimensions of Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Identity

| Dimensions                      | Questions | Mean      | Std. Deviation | Skewness  |            | Kurtosis  |            |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                                 |           | Statistic | Statistic      | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Std. Error |
| Role value                      | RV1       | 3.932     | 0.987          | -0.671    | 0.123      | -0.149    | 0.245      |
|                                 | RV2       | 3.48      | 1.161          | -0.336    | 0.123      | -0.735    | 0.245      |
|                                 | RV3       | 3.374     | 1.144          | -0.207    | 0.123      | -0.803    | 0.245      |
|                                 | RV4       | 3.917     | 0.999          | -0.49     | 0.123      | -0.751    | 0.245      |
|                                 | RV5       | 3.376     | 1.122          | -0.229    | 0.123      | -0.778    | 0.245      |
|                                 | RV6       | 3.866     | 0.981          | -0.473    | 0.123      | -0.522    | 0.245      |
| Professional value              | PV1       | 3.172     | 0.942          | -0.093    | 0.123      | -0.328    | 0.245      |
|                                 | PV2       | 3.909     | 0.984          | -0.585    | 0.123      | -0.331    | 0.245      |
|                                 | PV3       | 3.245     | 1.047          | -0.118    | 0.123      | -0.502    | 0.245      |
|                                 | PV4       | 3.311     | 1.117          | -0.186    | 0.123      | -0.65     | 0.245      |
| Professional Sense of belonging | PS1       | 3.715     | 1.17           | -0.554    | 0.123      | -0.648    | 0.245      |
|                                 | PS2       | 3.662     | 1.01           | -0.44     | 0.123      | -0.239    | 0.245      |
|                                 | PS3       | 2.909     | 1.155          | 0.109     | 0.123      | -0.786    | 0.245      |

Table 4.12 The Measurement of the Central Tendency of the Latent Variable Structure for the Dimensions of Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Identity (Cont.)

|                                |     |       |       |        |       |        |       |
|--------------------------------|-----|-------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| Professional behavior tendency | PB1 | 3.826 | 0.87  | -0.397 | 0.123 | -0.364 | 0.245 |
|                                | PB2 | 3.129 | 1.185 | -0.141 | 0.123 | -0.83  | 0.245 |
|                                | PB3 | 3.056 | 1.071 | 0.013  | 0.123 | -0.605 | 0.245 |
|                                | PB4 | 3.475 | 1.039 | -0.381 | 0.123 | -0.305 | 0.245 |
|                                | PB5 | 3.217 | 0.93  | -0.103 | 0.123 | -0.37  | 0.245 |

#### 4.3.4.2 Pearson Correlation Analysis

Before establishing the SEM model, it is necessary to ensure the correlation among the factors. Therefore, the Person analysis method (Pearson Correlation Coefficient) was used to analyze teachers' professional identity and its influencing factors.

Table 4.13 The Results of Pearson Correlation Coefficient Analysis (n=396)

| Items                 | Self-image | Self-efficacy | Job satisfaction | Social support | Professional identify |
|-----------------------|------------|---------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Self-image            | 1          |               |                  |                |                       |
| Self-efficacy         | 0.422***   | 1             |                  |                |                       |
| Job satisfaction      | 0.435***   | 0.429***      | 1                |                |                       |
| Social support        | 0.389***   | 0.413***      | 0.375***         | 1              |                       |
| Professional identify | 0.597***   | 0.570***      | 0.547***         | 0.579***       | 1                     |

Table 4.13 shows that self-image is positively related to self-efficacy ( $r=0.422$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), job satisfaction ( $r=0.435$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), social support ( $r=0.389$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and professional identity ( $r=0.597$ ,  $p<0.001$ ); Self-efficacy is positively related to job satisfaction ( $r=0.429$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), social support ( $r=0.413$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and professional identity ( $r=0.570$ ,  $p<0.001$ ); Job satisfaction is positively related to social support ( $r=0.375$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and professional identity ( $r=0.547$ ,  $p<0.01$ ); Social support is positively related to professional identity ( $r=0.579$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

To summarize, there is a positive correlation between the four influencing factors and these influencing factors are found to be positively correlated with professional identity.

#### 4.3.4.3 SEM Model

First, according to the evaluation index, the CMIN/DF value is less than 5, and the actual value is 3.119, which meets the requirements. The RMR value is less than 0.05, and the actual value is 0.036, which meets the requirements. The values of IFI, TLI and CFI are all greater than 0.09, and the actual values are 0.924, 0.914 and 0.923, respectively, which meet the requirements. All these indicators meet the criteria for goodness-of-fit, and therefore we can further in-depth research and analysis.

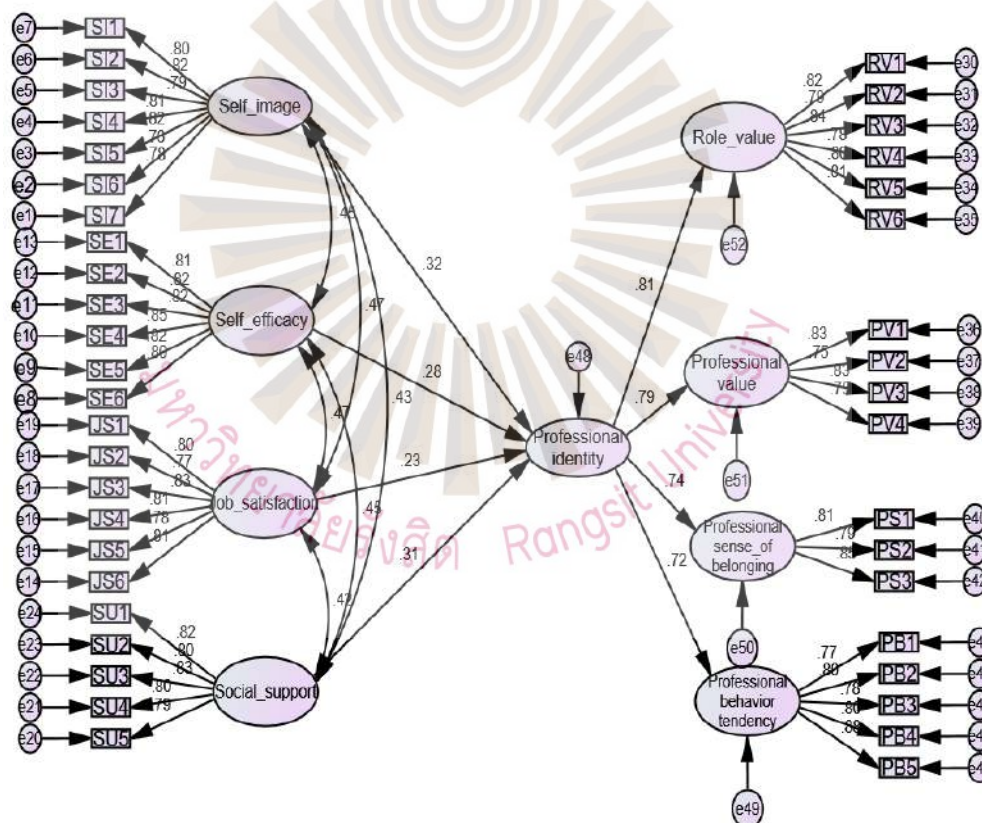


Figure 4.2 SEM Model

#### 4.3.4.4 Path analysis

Path analysis is a subset of SEM. It focuses on analyzing direct and indirect relationships between variables in a hypothesized model.

Table 4.14 Path Analysis Results

| Path                  |      |                  | Estimate | S.E. | C.R.  | P   | Label  |
|-----------------------|------|------------------|----------|------|-------|-----|--------|
| Professional identity | <--- | Self-image       | 0.176    | .029 | 6.042 | *** | Set up |
| Professional identity | <--- | Self-efficacy    | 0.177    | .033 | 5.438 | *** | Set up |
| Professional identity | <--- | Job satisfaction | 0.152    | .034 | 4.533 | *** | Set up |
| Professional identity | <--- | Social support   | 0.183    | .030 | 6.027 | *** | Set up |

In this study, according to the results of path analysis, self-image significantly and positively affects professional identity (CR=6.042,  $P<0.001$ ); Self-efficacy significantly and positively affects professional identity (CR=5.438,  $P<0.001$ ); Job satisfaction significantly and positively affects professional identity (CR=4.533,  $P<0.001$ ); Social support significantly and positively affects professional identity (CR=6.027,  $P<0.001$ ). Comparison of the degree of influence (standardized coefficient), from highest to lowest, were self-image, social support, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction.

#### 4.4 Findings about the Emerging Model

Based on the SEM model, four experts in the field of early childhood education participated in the discussion of this SEM model and discussed the development model of kindergarten teachers' professional identity.

Expert1: I strongly agree that self-image, self-efficacy, job satisfaction and social support will have an impact on kindergarten teachers' professional identity. Among them, self-image has the greatest impact on kindergarten teachers' professional identity. If a teacher believes that he or she is very suitable to be a teacher and firmly wants to be a good teacher, this teacher professional identity is very high. In general, difficulties encountered in real life are easy to overcome. If a teacher does not think that he is suitable to be a teacher at the beginning, it is easy to give up when encountering difficulties, and this kind of person is easy to give up when encountering difficulties.

Expert2: I also agree that these four factors have an impact on kindergarten teachers' professional identity. Generally speaking, teachers with higher self-image have higher professional identity. So teacher's self-image is very important. a positive self-image serves as a foundation for kindergarten teachers' professional identity, influencing their confidence, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and ability to overcome challenges. Building and nurturing a healthy self-image, coupled with supportive environments and relationships, is essential for fostering resilient and effective educators who are committed to their profession and students' success.

However, in my opinion, teachers' job satisfaction is also very important. The higher the satisfaction, the higher the professional identity of teachers. job satisfaction is integral to teachers' professional identity as it reflects their sense of fulfillment, motivation, commitment, retention in the profession, positive work environment, and impact on student outcomes. Fostering high levels of job satisfaction among teachers is essential for nurturing a strong and resilient professional identity within the educational community.

Expert3: In my opinion, this model clearly reflects the effects of self-image, self-efficacy, job satisfaction and social support on kindergarten teachers' professional identity. Among them, self-image has the greatest impact on teachers' professional identity, and job satisfaction has the least impact on teachers' professional identity. This is a bit new to my idea. I thought that job satisfaction would have the greatest impact on teachers' professional identity. But think also, if a person has a firm belief, even if the material does not meet their own requirements, they will not give up for their own beliefs.

Expert4: I think this model is consistent with the reality. Social status will affect whether students choose to be teachers, job satisfaction will affect whether teachers who have already been hired will quit, work ability will also affect leaders and other people's views on themselves, and self-image will affect whether they can persist in difficulties. When a teacher is determined to be a good teacher, the more courageous she is to face difficulties, the higher her professional identity will be.

The four experts all supported this SEM model and believe that self-image, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and social support have an impact on kindergarten teachers' professional identity.

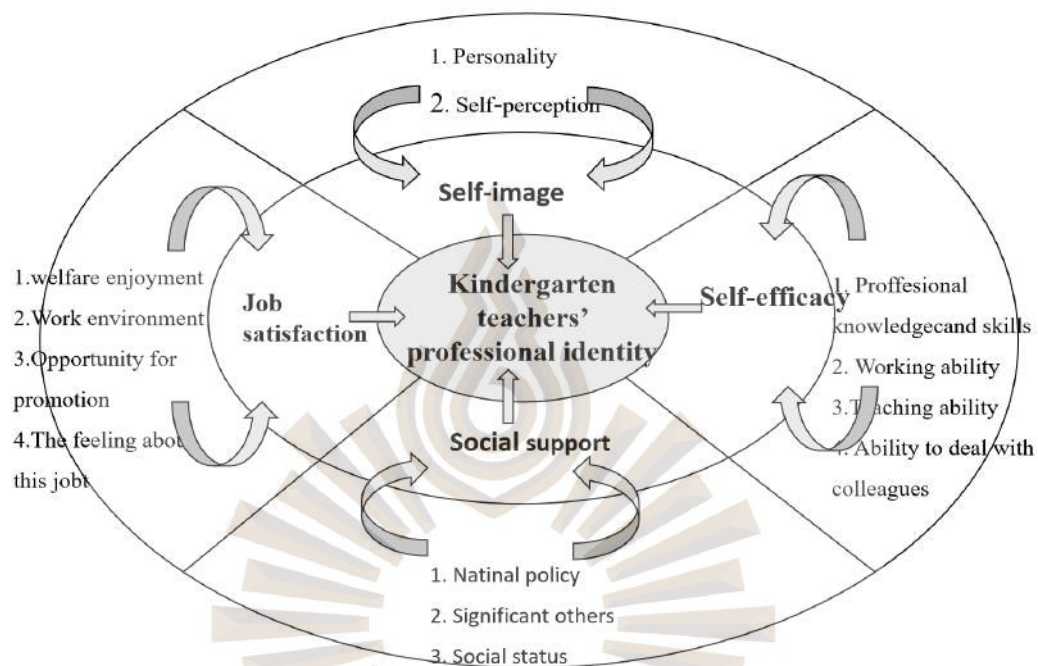


Figure 4.3 The Development Model for Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Identity

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion, Discussion, And Recommendations

This chapter specifies the conclusion drawn from the analysis of the results in Chapter 4, followed by discussions, and finally researcher has enclosed recommendations for further study in the field. There are four objectives of this study and the researcher presents justification for each objective of the study.

The study is designed with four objectives as follows:

- 1)To understand kindergarten teachers' life stories about their professional identity
- 2)To identify the influencing factors of kindergarten teachers' professional identity
- 3)To examine the relationship between the influencing factors and kindergarten teachers' professional identity
- 4)To explore a development model for kindergarten teachers' professional identity

The research questions are as follows:

- 1) What are the kindergarten teachers' life stories about their professional identity?
- 2) What are the influencing factors of kindergarten teachers' professional identity?

3) What is the relationship between influencing factors and kindergarten teachers' professional identity?

4) What is the model for kindergarten teachers' professional identity development?

## 5.1 Conclusion

### 5.1.1 Responses to Research Question 1 and Question 2

Question 1 was to understand kindergarten teachers' life stories about their professional identity; question 2 was to identify the influencing factors of kindergarten teachers' professional identity. From the two questions, four influencing factors of kindergarten teachers' professional identity were found, namely self-image, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and social support.

1) Self-Image: Self-image is a multifaceted concept that encompasses how professionals perceive themselves, influenced by both internal perceptions and external feedback from others (Kelchtermans, 2009; Shcherbak, 2024). A positive self-image contributes significantly to a robust professional identity, as teachers who view themselves as competent and valuable are more likely to engage deeply with their work and exhibit higher levels of commitment and motivation.

2) Self-Efficacy: Self-efficacy refers to the belief of an individual about his or her capabilities that contribute to achieving success in the workplace (Bandura, 1977; Rasool, Warraich, & Arshad, 2024). High levels of self-efficacy are associated with greater resilience, improved classroom management, and the ability to inspire and engage students. Teachers with strong self-efficacy are more likely to embrace challenges and persist in the face of difficulties, thereby reinforcing their professional identity.

3) Job Satisfaction: Job satisfaction refers to (1) overall satisfaction with the job, (2) satisfaction with working conditions, for example, salary and benefit, opportunities for promotion, work environment, workload, etc. (Canrinus et al., 2011; Judge, Zhang, & Glerum, 2020; Putri, Gumilar, & Mubarok, 2024). High job satisfaction is crucial for maintaining a positive professional identity, as it fosters a sense of fulfillment and reduces the likelihood of burnout and turnover.

4) Social Support: Social support encompasses various factors such as national policies, social status, media influence, and significant others (Mukherjee & Singh, 2024; Power, Champion, & Aris, 1988). Strong social support networks provide a sense of belonging and security, enabling teachers to cope with the stresses of their profession and to thrive in their roles. This support can come in various forms, such as mentorship, collaborative opportunities, and a supportive school culture.

### 5.1.2 Responses to Research Question 3

Question 3 aimed to examine the relationship between the identified influencing factors and kindergarten teachers' professional identity. The results revealed significant positive effects of all four factors on professional identity.

1) Self-Image: The analysis showed that self-image has a significant and positive effect on professional identity, with a critical ratio (CR) of 6.042 and a p-value of less than 0.001. This indicates that teachers who perceive themselves positively in their professional roles are more likely to have a strong sense of professional identity. Self-image emerged as the most influential factor among those studied, suggesting that efforts to enhance teachers' self-perception could have a profound impact on their professional identity.

2) Self-Efficacy: Self-efficacy also significantly and positively affects professional identity, with a CR of 5.438 and a p-value of less than 0.001. Teachers who feel confident in their abilities to perform their duties effectively are more likely to

develop a strong professional identity. This finding underscores the importance of building teachers' confidence through targeted professional development and support.

3) Job Satisfaction: The relationship between job satisfaction and professional identity was significant and positive, with a CR of 4.533 and a p-value of less than 0.001. Although job satisfaction had the least influence among the four factors, it still plays a critical role in shaping professional identity. Ensuring that teachers are satisfied with their work environment, recognition, and professional growth opportunities is essential for fostering a positive professional identity.

4) Social Support: Social support was found to significantly and positively impact professional identity, with a CR of 6.027 and a p-value of less than 0.001. The presence of a supportive network of national policy, social status, media influence, and significant others enhances teachers' sense of belonging and professional well-being, thereby strengthening their professional identity.

#### Comparative Influence of Factors

When comparing the standardized coefficients, self-image was identified as having the greatest influence on professional identity, while job satisfaction had the least. This hierarchy of influence suggests that interventions aimed at improving self-image and self-efficacy could yield more substantial benefits for teachers' professional identity compared to those solely focused on job satisfaction or social support, though all factors remain important.

### 5.1.3 Responses to Research Question 4

Question 4 aimed to explore the development model for kindergarten teachers' professional identity. This involved synthesizing the findings from the previous questions and integrating the identified influencing factors—self-image, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and social support—into a coherent framework that can guide the development of a strong professional identity among kindergarten teachers.

### Development Model for Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Identity

The proposed development model emphasizes a holistic approach, considering the dynamic interplay between the identified factors and their cumulative impact on professional identity. The model can be divided into several key components:

#### Advancing Self-Image:

1) **Personality:** Personality is a multifaceted construct that encompasses a range of traits, temperaments, cognitive patterns, emotional expressions, and developmental influences. Understanding personality can provide valuable insights into individual differences, motivations, behaviors, and interpersonal dynamics, contributing to personal growth, effective communication, and positive social interactions.

2) **Self-perception:** Advancing self-perception is an ongoing journey of self-discovery, self-acceptance, and personal growth. It involves self-awareness, recognizing strengths and weaknesses, clarifying values and beliefs, practicing self-compassion, embracing authenticity, pursuing continuous learning, and seeking support and feedback from others. A positive and realistic self-perception lays the foundation for confidence, resilience, and fulfillment in various aspects of life.

#### Improving Self-Efficacy:

1) **Professional knowledge and skills:** By actively engaging in continuous professional development, staying updated with best practices, integrating technology, practicing reflection, seeking specialized training, and developing leadership skills, kindergarten teachers can continuously improve their professional knowledge and skills, ultimately enhancing their effectiveness and impact on student learning outcomes.

2) **Working ability:** Improving working ability for kindergarten teachers involves developing essential skills such as time management, communication, adaptability, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, and lifelong learning habits. By enhancing these skills, teachers can effectively manage their responsibilities, create engaging learning environments, support student success, and thrive in their roles as educators.

3) Teaching ability: Improving teaching ability requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses pedagogical knowledge, engaging instructional practices, effective classroom management, technology integration, assessment and feedback strategies, and collaborative professional development. By continuously honing these skills and adopting innovative teaching approaches, kindergarten teachers can create dynamic, inclusive, and impactful learning experiences that nurture students' curiosity, growth, and academic success.

4) Ability to deal with colleagues: Improving the ability to deal effectively with colleagues involves developing strong communication skills, fostering collaboration and teamwork, honing conflict resolution abilities, offering support and encouragement, respecting diversity and inclusion, embracing constructive feedback, and engaging in professional development opportunities. By cultivating positive relationships, mutual respect, and a collaborative mindset, kindergarten teachers can create a harmonious and productive work environment that benefits both colleagues and students.

#### Enhancement of Job Satisfaction:

1) Work Environment: Creating a supportive and positive work environment is essential. This includes ensuring that teachers have the resources they need, a manageable workload, and opportunities for professional growth.

2) Welfare enjoyment: Ensuring the welfare and enjoyment of kindergarten teachers is crucial for fostering a positive professional identity and improving job satisfaction. When teachers feel valued, supported, and enjoy their work, they are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and effective in their roles.

3) Opportunity for promotion: Creating opportunities for promotion is crucial for motivating and retaining talented educators while also fostering a culture of continuous improvement within educational institutions.

4) The feeling about this job: The feeling about a job can greatly influence an individual's overall satisfaction, motivation, and performance. When it comes to teaching, especially in kindergarten settings, feelings about the job play a significant role in shaping teachers' experiences and interactions with students.

#### Strengthening Social Support:

1) National policy support: Strengthening national policies to support the professional identity of kindergarten teachers is a multifaceted approach that requires commitment and collaboration from all levels of the educational system. By aligning policies with the development model, providing adequate resources, creating a supportive work environment, recognizing teachers' efforts, building comprehensive support systems, encouraging community engagement, and implementing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, governments can ensure that kindergarten teachers are well-supported and empowered in their professional roles.

2) Significant others: Significant others in early childhood education encompass a wide range of individuals and groups who play vital roles in supporting children's holistic development, learning experiences, and well-being. Collaborative partnerships among parents, educators, peers, community members, health professionals, and policymakers create an inclusive and supportive ecosystem that nurtures children's growth, learning, and success in kindergarten and beyond.

3) Social status: Social status support has a significant impact on kindergarten teachers' professional identity by influencing their access to resources, recognition, empowerment, professional networks, and workplace support. Strengthening social status support systems can enhance their sense of competence, confidence, and satisfaction in their profession, ultimately contributing to their effectiveness and success in educating young children.

## 5.2 Discussion

Emerging issues found in this study were as follows:

5.2.1 Self-image significantly and positively affects kindergarten teachers' professional identity ( $CR=6.042$ ,  $P<0.001$ ). Having a strong self-image is essential for navigating life effectively, as it provides a framework for understanding past actions, making sense of present experiences, and predicting future behaviors. Conversely, a weak or negative self-image can lead to confusion, uncertainty, and unpredictability in one's actions and motivations (Beijaard et al., 2020). Therefore, efforts to foster a positive self-image among professionals from various aspects related to teacher training, leadership, curriculum implementation, and professional development, particularly in kindergartens, can contribute significantly to teachers' professional identity (Shavardova, 2020).

One adjective that aptly describes self-image in this context is "empowering." An empowering self-image not only influences how teachers perceive themselves but also impacts their confidence, resilience, and sense of purpose in their professional roles (Bandura, 1997). It empowers teachers to take initiative, embrace challenges, and continually strive for growth and improvement in their practice. This empowered self-image can catalyze developing and sustaining a robust professional identity, characterized by a strong sense of competence, dedication, and fulfillment in their work.

Furthermore, fostering an empowering self-image among kindergarten teachers can have broader implications for the educational environment. It can create a positive and supportive culture where teachers feel valued, respected, and motivated to contribute their best efforts to student learning and development (Skaalvik, E. & Skaalvik, S., 2017b). This, in turn, enhances the overall quality of education and the learning experiences of young children in kindergarten settings.

In conclusion, an empowering self-image is not only vital for individual teachers' professional identity but also contributes to a positive and thriving educational ecosystem in kindergartens. Efforts to nurture and strengthen teachers' self-image through targeted interventions, support mechanisms, and reflective practices can yield significant benefits for both educators and students alike.

5.2.2 Self-efficacy significantly and positively affects kindergarten teachers' professional identity ( $CR=5.438$ ,  $P<0.001$ ). Understanding and fostering self-efficacy among teachers is essential for promoting their professional growth (Beijaard et al., 2000). Kindergartens can support teachers' self-efficacy by providing opportunities for professional development, mentorship programs, constructive feedback, and creating a supportive work environment that encourages continuous learning and growth. By empowering teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy, they can be more effective in their teaching practices and contribute positively to student outcomes and the overall educational experience (Choi, 2005).

Moreover, research has shown that self-efficacy is closely linked to teachers' sense of autonomy and job satisfaction (Derakhshan et al., 2019; Orta et al., 2021). Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy tend to feel more confident in their abilities to handle challenges, make decisions, and engage students effectively (Ramakrishnan & Salleh, 2018). This confidence translates into a greater sense of job satisfaction and fulfillment, leading to increased motivation and commitment to their profession.

Furthermore, self-efficacy plays a crucial role in teacher resilience and coping strategies in the face of adversity or stress (Bandura, 1997; Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Teachers with strong self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to persevere and overcome obstacles, maintaining a positive attitude and adaptive mindset (Fisherman & Weiss, 2011; Henson, 2001). This resilience is vital for navigating the complex and demanding nature of the teaching profession, particularly in kindergarten settings where teachers often encounter diverse challenges.

Additionally, fostering self-efficacy among kindergarten teachers can have a ripple effect on the entire school community. Teachers who feel empowered and capable are more likely to collaborate effectively with colleagues, engage parents and caregivers in meaningful ways, and contribute positively to school-wide initiatives and improvement efforts (Elyashiv & Rozenberg, 2024; Goddard et al., 2004).

In conclusion, nurturing and enhancing self-efficacy among kindergarten teachers is not only beneficial for their individual professional growth but also contributes to a positive and thriving educational environment. By recognizing the importance of self-efficacy and implementing strategies to support and develop it, kindergartens can empower teachers to reach their full potential and make a lasting impact on student learning and development.

5.2.3 Job satisfaction significantly and positively affects kindergarten teachers' professional identity ( $CR=4.533$ ,  $P<0.001$ ). Job satisfaction plays a pivotal role in shaping the professional identity of kindergarten teachers, as highlighted by Xing (2022) in their study on the mediating role of job satisfaction between teacher burnout and professional identity. Moreover, research consistently shows that high levels of job satisfaction positively impact teachers' professional identity. Stephenson and Bell (2019) reinforce this notion by emphasizing the positive correlation between professional identification and job satisfaction, indicating that a strong sense of professional identity contributes to overall workplace satisfaction. Job satisfaction fosters a sense of purpose and fulfillment among teachers. When teachers are content with their work, they are more likely to perceive teaching as a meaningful and rewarding profession. This positive outlook strengthens their professional identity, reinforcing their commitment to their roles and their impact on students' lives (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Moreover, additional studies have highlighted the significance of job satisfaction in influencing teacher retention and turnover rates (Liu, Lin, & Zhang, 2020; Nguyen & Hunter, 2023). Teachers who are satisfied with their jobs are more likely to stay in the profession, leading to greater stability and continuity in educational settings. This continuity benefits students by providing consistent and experienced educators who can effectively meet their learning needs.

Furthermore, job satisfaction has been linked to various positive outcomes in educational settings, such as higher levels of student achievement, improved classroom climate, and better teacher-student relationships (Judge et al., 2020; Putri et al., 2024).

A satisfied teacher is more likely to be motivated, engaged, and committed to their students' success, ultimately contributing to a more effective education system.

Kindergartens play a vital role in fostering job satisfaction among teachers by addressing factors such as workload, cooperation, leadership styles, opportunities for professional development, motivation, and compensation. By creating a positive work environment, providing support systems, recognizing and valuing teachers' contributions, and promoting a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement, kindergartens can enhance job satisfaction, job engagement, and overall teacher well-being (Collins et al., 2014).

In conclusion, investing in teachers' job satisfaction not only benefits teachers but also contributes to improved student outcomes and a more effective education system as a whole. By recognizing the importance of job satisfaction and implementing strategies to enhance it, kindergartens can create a positive and thriving environment for teachers and students alike.

5.2.4 Social support significantly and positively affects kindergarten teachers' professional identity ( $CR=6.027$ ,  $P<0.001$ ). Social support significantly influences how teachers perceive themselves professionally, shaping their identities and roles within educational settings. Research underscores that national policy, social status, and social interactions, such as peer collaboration, family support, mentorship, and engagement with colleagues, are pivotal in this process.

National policies significantly impact kindergarten teachers' professional identities. For instance, Akaba et al. (2022) examine how policy directives during a universal Pre-Kindergarten expansion in New York City influenced teachers' identities. Such policies can create new expectations and demands, prompting teachers to adapt and redefine their professional roles. Zen (2018) further explores how international education policies, coupled with social, political, and historical factors, shape teacher identity and professional growth in Indonesia, highlighting the broader context within which teachers operate. As teachers navigate policy changes and adjustments in their practice,

it is essential to understand how these external factors impact their professional identity development. By actively engaging in these strategies, kindergarten teachers can better navigate the impact of national policies on their professional identities, ensuring they remain effective and fulfilled in their roles.

Moreover, Social status has emerged as a critical factor influencing job selection, job satisfaction, and retention, as demonstrated in various studies. Hannah and Kahn (1989), and Meoli et al. (2020) explore the correlation between social status and job selection, revealing that individuals often take the perceived status of a job into account when making career choices. The study highlights how social status serves as a motivational factor, influencing individuals' career aspirations and preferences. Anderson et al. (2019) contribute to this understanding by exploring the link between social recognition at work and job satisfaction. Their findings highlight that employees who receive adequate social recognition and appreciation for their contributions tend to experience higher levels of job satisfaction, engagement, and commitment to their roles. In sum, the significance of social status in the workplace cannot be understated. It plays a vital role in shaping career decisions, enhancing job satisfaction, and ensuring employee retention. Organizations that prioritize social recognition and appreciate their employees' contributions are likely to foster a more engaged, satisfied, and committed workforce.

In addition, various factors such as peer support, colleague support, mentor influence, and parental involvement play crucial roles in the negotiation of professional identity among teachers (Beaton, 2022; González-Calvo & Fernández-Balboa, 2018; Walters et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2020). Corcoran et al. (2019) and Tristani et al. (2021) demonstrate how these elements contribute to teachers' sense of identity and professional development. Teacher training strategies should, therefore, incorporate multidimensional approaches that consider these social influences, professional roles, and identity development. For example, mentorship programs play a crucial role in professional identity formation. Experienced mentors provide guidance, feedback, and support, helping novice teachers navigate the complexities of the profession.

Mentorship can foster a sense of competence and confidence, which is vital for developing a strong professional identity.

Furthermore, organizational support, including supportive leadership, collaborative work environments, and professional development opportunities, is essential in fostering a positive professional identity among teachers. Organizations that prioritize these elements contribute significantly to teachers' sense of identity and belonging (Osterman, 2023). This support extends to recognizing and valuing teachers' contributions, providing adequate resources and training, and promoting a culture of teamwork and continuous improvement.

In conclusion, kindergarten teachers should actively engage with these strategies to navigate the multifaceted influences on their professional identities effectively. They should stay informed about policy changes, consider the impact of social status on their career choices, seek mentorship and peer support, and advocate for supportive organizational environments. By doing so, educators can enhance their professional identities, job satisfaction, and overall effectiveness in shaping the education sector positively.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

### **5.3.1 Recommendations for the use of the findings**

Firstly, concerning the above findings in helping kindergartens to develop strategies to enhance kindergarten teachers' professional identity and apply the research results to guide and train kindergarten teachers. By integrating these strategies, kindergartens can create an environment that nurtures and strengthens teachers' professional identities. This holistic approach not only supports teachers' well-being and professional growth but also leads to better educational outcomes for students and a more cohesive, effective education system as a whole.

Secondly, concerning the above findings in helping kindergartens to understand the factors needed to enhance teachers' professional identity and check kindergarten teachers' professional identity. By understanding and addressing these factors, kindergartens can create an environment that supports and enhances teachers' professional identity. This not only benefits the teachers but also leads to improved student outcomes and a more effective education system.

Thirdly, concerning the above findings in helping kindergarten teachers understand the importance of enhancing teachers' professional identity, which not only contributes to the sustainable development of kindergartens but also facilitates the professional identity development of teachers themselves.

### **5.3.2 Recommendations for Future Research**

First, researchers are encouraged to carry out similar studies but with kindergarten teachers in different regions, cultural backgrounds, and socioeconomic contexts or choose teachers at different levels as research participants, for example, primary school teachers.

Second, the methodology used to carry out this study could be a guide for a replication study. By following these guidelines and building upon the methodology of the original study, a replication study can contribute to the robustness and generalizability of research findings, deepen understanding of educational phenomena, and inform evidence-based practices in teaching and teacher development.

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## Appendices



## **Appendix A**

### **Letter of Invitation for IOC Experts**



มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต Rangsit University  
 100000 อ.พหลโยธิน กรุงเทพฯ 12000 Muang-Ake, Pathayothin Rd.  
 Rangsit 12000 Pathumthani 12000, Thailand T: (66) 2997 2200-30  
 F: (66) 2791 5757  
 E: info@ru.ac.th

STC 4800/0510

December 1, 2023

Subject: Invitation for being an Index Item - Objective Congruence (IOC) expert

Dear Assistant Professor Dr. Pairin Srisinthorn,

The Doctor of Education Program, in Educational Studies, Suryadhep Teachers College, Rangsit University organized a Research Proposal Defense for Miss Guohui Zhang, Student Number 6306161 (Asst. Prof. Dr. Anchalee Chayanuvat is her advisor) on 8 September 2023. Her research title is "The Development of Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Identity in Hubei, China". Currently, she is in the middle of the instrument design phase and has come up with the instrument for her study.

Thus, the Program would like to invite you to be our IOC expert for examining the research instruments. Your suggestions to improve our student's research truly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Pimurai Limpapath

Assistant Professor Dr. Pimurai Limpapath, Ph.D.

Director of Doctor of Education Program, in Educational Studies

Suryadhep Teachers College, Rangsit University

มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต Rangsit University



มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต Rangsit University T. (66) 2997 2260-30  
 อีเมล: info@rsu.ac.th E-mail: info@rsu.ac.th  
 กรุงเทพมหานคร Bangkok, Thailand F. (66) 2791 5757  
 12000 Pathumthani 12000, Thailand

STC 4800/0511

December 1, 2023

Subject: Invitation for you to be an Index Item - Objective Congruence (IOC) expert

Dear Dr. Thanyapatra Soisuwan,

The Doctor of Education Program, in Educational Studies, Suryadhep Teachers College, Rangsit University organized a Research Proposal Defense for Miss Guohui Zhang, Student Number 6306161 (Asst. Prof. Dr. Anchalee Chayanuvat is her advisor) on 8 September 2023. Her research title is "The Development of Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Identity in Hubei, China". Currently, she is in the middle of the instrument design phase and has come up with the instrument for her study.

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Sincerely yours,

*Dr. Pimurai Limpapath*

Assistant Professor Dr. Pimurai Limpapath, Ph.D.

Director of Doctor of Education Program, in Educational Studies

Suryadhep Teachers College, Rangsit University



มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต Rangsit University T. (66) 2997 2200-30  
 เมืองรังสิต, ปทุมธานี Muang-Art, Pathumthani Rd. F. (66) 2751 5737  
 รังสิต 12000 Pathumthani 12000, Thailand E. info@ru.ac.th

STC 4800/0512

December 1, 2023

Subject: Invitation for being an Index Item - Objective Congruence (IOC) expert

Dear Dr. Mongkol Sodachan,

The Doctor of Education Program, in Educational Studies, Suryadhep Teachers College, Rangsit University organized a Research Proposal Defense for Miss Guohui Zhang, Student Number 6306161 (Asst. Prof. Dr. Anchalee Chayanuvat is her advisor) on 8 September 2023. Her research title is "The Development of Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Identity in Hubei, China". Currently, she is in the middle of the instrument design phase and has come up with the instrument for her study.

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Sincerely yours,

*Dr. Pimurai Limpapath*

Assistant Professor Dr. Pimurai Limpapath, Ph.D.

Director of Doctor of Education Program, in Educational Studies

Suryadhep Teachers College, Rangsit University



## Memorandum

STC 4800/0513

December 1, 2023

Subject: Invitation for being an Index Item - Objective Congruence (IOC) expert

Dear Dr. Techameth Pianchana,

The Doctor of Education Program, in Educational Studies, Suryadhep Teachers College, Rangsit University organized a Research Proposal Defense for Miss Guohui Zhang, Student Number 6306161 (Asst. Prof. Dr. Anchalee Chayanuvat is her advisor) on 8 September 2023. Her research title is "The Development of Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Identity in Hubei, China". Currently, she is in the middle of the instrument design phase and has come up with the instrument for her study.

Thus, the Program would like to invite you to be our IOC expert for examining the research instruments. Your suggestions to improve our student's research truly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Assistant Professor Dr. Pimurai Limpapath, Ph.D.

Director of Doctor of Education Program, in Educational Studies

Suryadhep Teachers College, Rangsit University



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STC 4800/0513

December 1, 2023

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Director of Doctor of Education Program, in Educational Studies

Suryadhep Teachers College, Rangsit University



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Sincerely yours,

*Dr. Pimurai Limpapath*

Assistant Professor Dr. Pimurai Limpapath, Ph.D.

Director of Doctor of Education Program, in Educational Studies  
Suryadhep Teachers College, Rangsit University

มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต Rangsit University



**Appendix B**  
**Questionnaire**

## A Questionnaire on Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Identity

Dear teacher:

Hello! Thank you very much for participating in this survey. The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore the influencing factors of kindergarten teachers' professional identity and to understand kindergarten teachers' professional identity. This survey is anonymous, all your information will be strictly confidential, and the survey results are only for scientific research, please do not have any concerns when filling in. I hope you can spare your precious time to finish it carefully. Thank you for your support and cooperation!

### Part 1: Basic information

Please tick  $\sqrt{\quad}$  on the answer according to the actual situation.

1. Your gender: A. male      B. female
2. Your age: A. 20-29      B. 30-39  
                         C. 40-49      D. Above 50
3. Your major: A. Preschool education B. Non-preschool education
4. Your education background: A. Junior college or below  
                                                 B. Bachelor degree C. Master Degree or above
5. Your teaching years: A. 0-5 years      B. 6-15 years  
                                                 C. 16-25 years      D. above 25 years
6. Your professional title: A. None B. Junior C. Intermediate D. advanced
7. Your marital status: A. single B. Married
8. Kindergarten nature of work: A. public B. Private
9. Your kindergarten is located in: A. Wuhan B. Jingmen C. Qianjiang City
10. Your salary (Yuan): A. 1000-2000      B. 2001-3000  
                                                 C. 3001-4000      D. 4001 and above

### Part 2: Questionnaire on influencing factors

Please draw " $\sqrt{\quad}$ " on numbers 1-5 according to the problem statement.

1= Highly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree.

| Factors       | Statements                                                                                                                 | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Highly Disagree |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-----------------|
| Self-image    | 1. I think I am an excellent kindergarten teacher.<br>我认为我是一名优秀的幼儿教师。                                                      |                |       |         |          |                 |
|               | 2. I have enough love and patience to treat children.<br>我有足够的爱心和耐心对待幼儿。                                                   |                |       |         |          |                 |
|               | 3. I think I have the right personality to be a kindergarten teacher.<br>我认为我的性格适合当幼儿教师。                                   |                |       |         |          |                 |
|               | 4. I am full of passion and vitality for the work of kindergarten teachers<br>我对幼儿教师的工作充满激情和活力。                            |                |       |         |          |                 |
|               | 5. I became a kindergarten teacher because I like children.<br>因为喜欢小孩子，我才成为幼儿教师的。                                          |                |       |         |          |                 |
|               | 6. Communicating with children makes me feel happy.<br>和幼儿交流沟通使我感到愉悦。                                                      |                |       |         |          |                 |
|               | 7. I have a keen interest in being a kindergarten teacher. 我对当幼儿园老师有着浓厚的兴趣。                                                |                |       |         |          |                 |
| Self-efficacy | 8. As a kindergarten teacher, I can seriously complete the work within the professional scope.<br>作为一名幼儿教师，我能认真完成职业范围内的工作。 |                |       |         |          |                 |
|               | 9. When I meet difficulties in my work, I believe I have the ability to solve them.                                        |                |       |         |          |                 |

|                         |                                                                                                                                       |  |  |  |  |  |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
|                         | 在工作中遇到困难，我相信我有能力解决。                                                                                                                   |  |  |  |  |  |
|                         | 10. I have mastered the knowledge and skills to meet the requirements of teaching.<br>我掌握的知识和技能能够满足教学的要求。                             |  |  |  |  |  |
|                         | 11. I can choose teaching contents and methods according to teaching objectives<br>我能够根据教学目标选择教学内容和方法。                                |  |  |  |  |  |
|                         | 12. I am confident to establish a good teacher-child relationship, so that children feel warm and happy.<br>我有信心建立良好的师幼关系，让幼儿感到温暖和愉悦。 |  |  |  |  |  |
|                         | 13. I have the ability to build a good relationship with my colleagues and get along well with them. 我有能力与同事建立良好的关系，与他们友好相处。          |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Job satisfaction</b> | 14. I love my job and am proud to be a kindergarten teacher. 我爱我的工作，并为此感到自豪。                                                          |  |  |  |  |  |
|                         | 15. I think kindergarten teachers have higher salaries.<br>我认为幼儿教师有较高的工资。                                                             |  |  |  |  |  |
|                         | 16. I think kindergarten teachers have a higher social status at present.<br>我认为当前幼儿教师的社会地位较高。                                        |  |  |  |  |  |
|                         | 17. I think kindergarten teaching is a respected profession.<br>我认为幼儿教师是一个受人尊重的职业。                                                    |  |  |  |  |  |
|                         | 18. I think the interpersonal relationship of kindergarten                                                                            |  |  |  |  |  |

|                |                                                                                                                                 |  |  |  |  |  |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
|                | teachers is relatively harmonious.<br>我认为幼儿教师的人际关系相对和谐一些。                                                                       |  |  |  |  |  |
|                | 19.I think the kindergarten offers good opportunities for promotion.<br>我认为学校提供了很好的晋升机会。                                        |  |  |  |  |  |
| Social support | 20.The national policy on the early childhood education industry will affect my professional identity. 国家对幼教行业的政策会影响我的职业认同。     |  |  |  |  |  |
|                | 21.Other people's opinions of the early childhood education industry will affect my professional identity. 他人对幼教行业的看法会影响我的职业认同。 |  |  |  |  |  |
|                | 22.I think my parents can influence my professional identity. 我认为我的父母会影响我的职业认同感。                                                |  |  |  |  |  |
|                | 23. I think my teachers can influenced my professional identity. 我认为我的老师影响我的职业认同。                                               |  |  |  |  |  |
|                | 24.I think my friends can influence my professional identity. 我认为我的朋友影响我的职业认同。                                                  |  |  |  |  |  |

### Part 3: Questionnaire on professional identity

Please draw "√" on numbers 1-5 according to the problem statement.

1= Highly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree.

| Dimensions | Statements                                                      | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Highly Disagree |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-----------------|
| Role value | 1. I am proud to be an early childhood teacher. 我为自己是一名幼儿教师而自豪。 |                |       |         |          |                 |

|                    |                                                                                                                                                       |  |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
|                    | 2.A career as a kindergarten teacher can realize the value of my life. 从事幼儿教师职业能够实现我的人生价值。                                                            |  |  |  |  |  |
|                    | 3.When introducing myself, I am happy to mention that I am an early childhood teacher. 在做自我介绍的时候，我乐意提到我是一名幼儿教师。                                       |  |  |  |  |  |
|                    | 4. I am suited to work as a kindergarten teacher. 我适合做幼儿教师工作。                                                                                         |  |  |  |  |  |
|                    | 5. As a kindergarten teacher, I often feel respected. 作为一名幼儿教师，我时常觉得受人尊重。                                                                             |  |  |  |  |  |
|                    | 6. I get a sense of relief when I see or hear words that celebrate the profession of early childhood teaching. 当看到或听到颂扬幼儿教师职业的话语时，我会有一种欣慰感。           |  |  |  |  |  |
| Professional value | 7. I believe that kindergarten teacher profession is important in promoting the development of individual human beings. 我认为幼儿教师职业对促进人类个体发展十分重要。       |  |  |  |  |  |
|                    | 8. I believe that the work of kindergarten teachers is important in promoting the growth and development of their students. 我认为幼儿教师的工作对促进学生的成长与发展很重要。 |  |  |  |  |  |
|                    | 9. I believe that the work of early childhood teachers plays an important role in the development of human society. 我认为幼儿教师的工作对人类社会有重要作用。             |  |  |  |  |  |
|                    | 10. I believe that the kindergarten teaching profession is one of the most                                                                            |  |  |  |  |  |

|                                 |                                                                                                                                          |  |  |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
|                                 | important professions in the social division of labor. 我认为幼儿教师职业是社会分工中最重要的职业之一。                                                          |  |  |  |  |  |
| Professional sense of belonging | 11. I care about how others view the early childhood teaching profession. 我关心别人如何看待幼儿教师职业。                                               |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                 | 12. I feel insulted when someone makes unfounded accusations against the community of kindergarten teachers. 当有人无端指责幼儿教师群体时，我感到自己已受到了侮辱。 |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                 | 13. I care what other people think of kindergarten teacher community. 我在乎别人如何看待幼儿教师群体。                                                   |  |  |  |  |  |
| Professional behavior tendency  | 14. I was able to complete my work on time. 我能够按时完成正作任务。                                                                                 |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                 | 15. I am able to fulfill my teaching duties conscientiously. 我能够认真完成教学工作。                                                                |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                 | 16. I can take the work within my area of responsibility seriously. 我能认真对待职责范围内的工作。                                                      |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                 | 17. In order to maintain the normal order of the school, I will abide by those informal systems. 为了维护学校的正常教学秩序，我会遵守那些非正式的制度。             |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                 | 18. I am proactive in creating harmonious coworker relationships. 我积极主动地创造和谐的同事关系。                                                       |  |  |  |  |  |



**Appendix C**  
**Interview Questions**

## **The Life Stories Interviews of Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Identity**

1. Why do you choose to be a kindergarten teacher?

你为什么选择当一名幼儿园教师？

2. What was your previous view of the kindergarten teaching profession?

您以前对幼儿园教师职业的看法是什么？

3. What was your present view of the kindergarten teaching profession?

您对现在对幼儿园教师的看法是什么？

4. What is the event or person in your career that has impressed you the most? Why?

在您的职业生涯中，给您留下最深刻印象的事件或人物是什么？为什么？

5. Do you want to change your job? Why?

您想换工作吗？为什么？





**Appendix D**  
**IOC for Questionnaire**

# INSTRUMENT 1

## ITEM OBJECTIVE CONGRUENCE (IOC)

### FOR

#### A Questionnaire of Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Identity

| No.                                                                           | Statement                                                                                                   | Expert Opinion Review |   |    | Remarks |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|----|---------|
|                                                                               |                                                                                                             | +1                    | 0 | -1 |         |
| <b>PART 1. PERSONAL INFORMATION</b>                                           |                                                                                                             |                       |   |    |         |
| <b>1</b>                                                                      | Your gender:<br>A. male    B. female                                                                        |                       |   |    |         |
| <b>2</b>                                                                      | Your age:<br>A. 20-29    B. 30-39<br>C. 40-49    D. Above 50                                                |                       |   |    |         |
| <b>3</b>                                                                      | Your major:<br>A. Preschool education<br>B. Non-preschool education                                         |                       |   |    |         |
| <b>4</b>                                                                      | Your education background:<br>A. Junior college or below<br>B. Bachelor degree<br>C. Master Degree or above |                       |   |    |         |
| <b>5</b>                                                                      | Your teaching years:<br>A. 0-5 years    B. 6-15years<br>C. Over 15 years                                    |                       |   |    |         |
| <b>6</b>                                                                      | Your professional title:<br>A. None    B. Junior<br>C. Intermediate    D. advanced                          |                       |   |    |         |
| <b>7</b>                                                                      | Your marital status:<br>A. single    B. Married                                                             |                       |   |    |         |
| <b>8</b>                                                                      | Kindergarten nature of work:<br>A. public    B. Private                                                     |                       |   |    |         |
| <b>9</b>                                                                      | Your kindergarten is located in:<br>A. Wuhan<br>B. Jingmen<br>C. Qianjiang City                             |                       |   |    |         |
| <b>10</b>                                                                     | Your salary (Yuan):<br>A.1000-2000    B. 2001-3000<br>C.3001-4000    D. 4001 and above                      |                       |   |    |         |
| <b>PART 2. FIVE DIMENSIONS OF KINERGARTEN TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY</b> |                                                                                                             |                       |   |    |         |
| <b>Self-image</b>                                                             |                                                                                                             |                       |   |    |         |
| <b>1</b>                                                                      | I think I am an excellent preschool teacher.<br>我认为我是一名优秀的幼儿教师。                                             |                       |   |    |         |

|                      |                                                                                                                                |  |  |  |  |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| 2                    | I have enough love and patience to treat children.<br>我有足够的爱心和耐心对待幼儿。                                                          |  |  |  |  |
| 3                    | I think I have the right personality to be a kindergarten teacher.<br>我认为我的性格适合当幼儿教师。                                          |  |  |  |  |
| 4                    | I am full of passion and vitality for the work of kindergarten teachers<br>我对幼儿教师的工作充满激情和活力。                                   |  |  |  |  |
| 5                    | I became a kindergarten teacher because I like children.<br>因为喜欢小孩子，我才成为幼儿教师的。                                                 |  |  |  |  |
| 6                    | Communicating with children makes me feel happy.<br>和幼儿交流沟通使我感到愉悦。                                                             |  |  |  |  |
| 7                    | Being a kindergarten teacher keeps my childlike innocence forever.<br>当幼儿教师使我永远保持童心。                                           |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Self-efficacy</b> |                                                                                                                                |  |  |  |  |
| 8                    | As a kindergarten teacher, I can seriously complete the work within the professional scope.<br>作为一名幼儿教师，我能认真完成职业范围内的工作。        |  |  |  |  |
| 9                    | When I meet difficulties in my work, I believe I have the ability to solve them.<br>在工作中遇到困难，我相信我有能力解决。                        |  |  |  |  |
| 10                   | I have mastered the knowledge and skills to meet the requirements of teaching.<br>我掌握的知识和技能能够满足教学的要求。                          |  |  |  |  |
| 11                   | I can choose teaching contents and methods according to teaching objectives<br>我能够根据教学目标选择教学内容和方法。                             |  |  |  |  |
| 12                   | I am confident to establish a good teacher-child relationship, so that children feel warm and happy. 我有信心建立良好的师幼关系，让幼儿感到温暖和愉悦。 |  |  |  |  |
| 13                   | I have the ability to build a good relationship with my colleagues and get along well with                                     |  |  |  |  |

|                         |                                                                                                                              |  |  |  |  |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
|                         | them. 我有能力与同事建立良好的关系，与他们友好相处。                                                                                                |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Job satisfaction</b> |                                                                                                                              |  |  |  |  |
| <b>14</b>               | I love my job and am proud to be a kindergarten teacher. 我爱我的工作，并为此感到自豪。                                                     |  |  |  |  |
| <b>15</b>               | I think kindergarten teachers have higher salaries.<br>我认为幼儿教师有较高的工资。                                                        |  |  |  |  |
| <b>16</b>               | I think kindergarten teachers have a higher social status at present.<br>我认为当前幼儿教师的社会地位较高。                                   |  |  |  |  |
| <b>17</b>               | I think kindergarten teaching is a respected profession.<br>我认为幼儿教师是一个受人尊重的职业。                                               |  |  |  |  |
| <b>18</b>               | I think the interpersonal relationship of kindergarten teachers is relatively harmonious.<br>我认为幼儿教师的人际关系相对和谐一些。             |  |  |  |  |
| <b>19</b>               | I think the kindergarten offers good opportunities for promotion. 我认为学校提供了很好的晋升机会。                                           |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Social support</b>   |                                                                                                                              |  |  |  |  |
| <b>20</b>               | The national policy on the early childhood education industry will affect my professional identity. 国家对幼教行业的政策会影响我的职业认同。     |  |  |  |  |
| <b>21</b>               | Other people's opinions of the early childhood education industry will affect my professional identity. 他人对幼教行业的看法会影响我的职业认同。 |  |  |  |  |
| <b>22</b>               | I think my parents can influence my professional identity. 我认为我的父母会影响我的职业认同感。                                                |  |  |  |  |
| <b>23</b>               | I think my teachers can influence my professional identity. 我认为我的老师影响我的职业认同。                                                 |  |  |  |  |
| <b>24</b>               | I think my friends can influence my professional identity. 我认为我的朋友影响我的职业认同。                                                  |  |  |  |  |

|    |                                                                                                                          |  |  |  |  |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| 25 | The national policy on the early childhood education industry will affect my professional identity. 国家对幼教行业的政策会影响我的职业认同。 |  |  |  |  |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|





## **Appendix E**

### **IOC for Interview Questionnaire**

## INSTRUMENT 2

### Semi-structured Interview Questions for Kindergarten Teachers

| No. | Statement                                                                                                            | Expert Opinion Review |   |    | Remarks |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|----|---------|
|     |                                                                                                                      | +1                    | 0 | -1 |         |
|     | <b>Questions</b>                                                                                                     |                       |   |    |         |
| 1   | Why do you choose to be a kindergarten teacher?<br>您为什么选择当一名幼儿园教师?                                                   |                       |   |    |         |
| 2   | What was your previous view of the kindergarten teaching profession?<br>您以前对幼儿园教师职业的看法是什么?                           |                       |   |    |         |
| 3   | What was your present view of the kindergarten teaching profession?<br>您现在对幼儿园教师职业的看法是什么?                            |                       |   |    |         |
| 4   | What is the event or person in your career that has impressed you the most? Why?<br>在您的职业生涯中，给您留下最深刻印象的事件或人物是什么？为什么? |                       |   |    |         |
| 5   | Do you want to change your job? Why?<br>您想换工作吗？为什么?                                                                  |                       |   |    |         |



**Appendix F**  
**Interview Data**

## Case 1

**Interviewee:** Why do you choose to be a kindergarten teacher?

**A:** When I was young, I showed a strong interest in young children. The children in my neighborhood were always gathering together, and I often acted as a small guide, organizing various games for them to play. At that time, I felt that being with children was a particularly fun and fulfilling experience. I had no idea at the time that this interest would become my future career choice.

As I grew older, I felt that I was well suited to become a kindergarten teacher because I am caring, patient, and responsible. And, my interest in early childhood education has not only not waned, but has become stronger. By the way, my college entrance examination was filled out by myself. My parents supported me to be a kindergarten teacher very much. My parents think kindergarten teacher is a stable and easy job.

**Interviewee:** What was your previous view of the kindergarten teaching profession?

**A:** Since I was a child, I have always thought that kindergarten teachers do a very great job. Teachers not only have to teach children culture and knowledge but also have to take care of the children's daily lives, which is not easy and deserves everyone's respect. And I think working in kindergarten will be very happy, because every day with children, there are no complex interpersonal relationships.

**Interviewee:** What was your present view of the kindergarten teaching profession?

**A:** Now I feel that being a kindergarten teacher is not so easy. When I got my schedule at college, I was stunned. More than 20 lessons a week, not only to learn professional knowledge, such as child psychology, kindergarten teachers, and oral training, but also to learn professional skills, such as singing, dancing, painting, and so on. This is when I realized that kindergarten teachers are not as easy as I thought.

**Interviewee:** What is the event or person in your career that has impressed you the most? Why?

**A:** When I was a kindergarten intern, I encountered a memorable incident: a teacher took over a new class, and when she poured water for the students, she realized that none of the students had said thank you to her. During the lesson, the teacher said to the students, "I didn't hand you water right away when I poured it for you, did I? The Teacher will give you a question, how can you make the teacher give you the poured water right away?" The students talked and said everything, and finally, the teacher guided the students "Because the teacher poured the water for me, so we. Teacher?" "Thank you" the students replied. Finally, the teacher said, "In the future, when the teacher pours water for the children or does other things, don't forget to say thank you". Through a small incident of pouring water, this teacher accomplished a profound educational lesson for her students, which not only opened their hearts to gratitude but also strengthened my determination to become a kindergarten teacher.

I used to think, like many people, that a teacher was a babysitter, but this gratitude lesson changed my mind completely. It turns out that early childhood education is such an important profession, and I am proud to be a kindergarten teacher, and I want to be a good one.

**Interviewee:** Do you want to change your job? Why?

**A:** Yes, I want to change my job. After working for some time, I realized that the leaders seldom paid attention to the work of kindergarten teachers, and very few of them went to listen to classes; in the regular meetings of the teachers, the leaders emphasized more on the safety of the students and seldom touched on the quality of the teachers' teaching. Kindergarten teachers were often pulled out to do things that had nothing to do with teaching, and the school's decision-makers subconsciously assumed that one less class would not affect the students.

I was so energized when I first went into the school that I expressed my desire to listen to the experienced teachers and was politely turned down. Later, I proposed to organize teachers to prepare lessons together, which would not only improve the quality of teaching but also strengthen the teachers. However, this offer was rejected. Some teachers privately complained that I like to perform blindly, and said that do not let them work, they want to rest.

Furthermore, I know that as a kindergarten teacher, the pay is low, but I don't expect it to be so low. I only get \$2,500 a month, after rent and food, there's not much left. If I get the professional title, my salary will be increased, but it takes a long time to get the advanced title.

## Case 2

**Interviewee:** Why do you choose to be a kindergarten teacher?

**B:** When I was young, my mother and father bought a lot of books for me, and when I grew up, they enrolled me in all kinds of tutorial classes. However, I am not good at learning, and my college entrance examination is very poor, so I finally chose to enroll in the low-score of the preschool education program. But I think the early childhood industry has a future, because the national policy is tilting towards this industry, and there will be more and more children in the future because of the three-child policy.

My dad and mom were super pissed when they found out about the preschool program I chose to major in, they thought I shouldn't be a kindergarten teacher because the pay was too low to support a family. My father once said: I wouldn't be so violently opposed to you even if you were an elementary school teacher.

**Interviewee:** What was your previous view of the kindergarten teaching profession?

**B:** My father and mother are teachers, as long as I did not study well, my father and mother would say: Be careful you won't be able to get into a good university in the future, and you can only go to kindergarten to take care of children. Although I always thought that only people with bad grades would become

kindergarten teachers and take care of other people's children, I also thought that this job was very easy and stable, and it was a pretty good job.

**Interviewee:** What was your present view of the kindergarten teaching profession?

**B:** This year, the fourth group of children I taught graduated. When I see them graduate, I feel an inexplicable sense of pride. They are the witnesses of my hard work and the most valuable harvest in my career.

I used to think kindergarten teachers were babysitters, now I don't think like that. I think early childhood teaching is an important profession. In this kindergarten, which is full of children's innocence and sunshine, I have found my happiness. I not only teach the children knowledge but also irrigate their growth with my heart. As a kindergarten teacher, I feel that I have played an important role in nurturing several loving and responsible future stars for this society. The history of my life is to blossom a beautiful flower in this land where laughter and tears are intertwined.

I know a lot of people who feel that their work environment is not good, and their colleagues do not get along with each other. But nothing like that happened to me. I am a warm-hearted person who likes to help others. I often do small favors for other colleagues and they all like me very much. I think I'm good with people. Overall, I think the atmosphere where I work is pretty good.

**Interviewee:** What is the event or person in your career that has impressed you the most? Why?

**B:** I chose to major in preschool Education because of my poor grades, and I didn't know that I had to learn dance, which I had never done before. The competition that made sure I was in dance team training because of the lack of boys at the time became a turning point in my life. Here I met Ms. Luo, who was in charge of the dance rehearsal. When I felt shy and inferior because I didn't do the moves well, she was the one who encouraged me by saying, "Don't feel embarrassed, you haven't taken dance lessons before, and dancing like this is already very impressive, and you're still quite talented in dance." I know Ms. Luo was comforting me, but her words gave me strong confidence, I firmly believe that I have a great talent for dance, learning dance more and more hard, did not think that my dance was better and better, and then participated in a lot of dance competitions, won a variety of awards.

When I first started at the kindergarten where I work now, the school leader assigned me a teacher and let her teach me how to teach the class and how to deal with things that happen to the students. Mrs. Peng was about 40 years old and very kind. She taught me how to teach, how to deal with problems in the classroom, and told me what I had just taught that I had not handled well, and which method of teaching would be more effective. She tried her best to teach me, instead of hiding it. I have a lot of respect for her.

**Interviewee:** Do you want to change your job? Why?

**B:** Seriously, it's true that it's not a good choice for boys to be kindergarten teachers, and if possible, try to become college teachers. The people you come into contact with in college are different, the social status is a bit higher, and the pay is a bit better. The kindergarten paycheck is more than enough to support a family, so I still need to work part-time on the weekends and teach kids how to dance. I find it very tiring. If I had another chance, I would study hard, get into a good university, and choose a profession that earns a lot of money. I would like to quit my job and find a profession that pays me more, but sometimes I wonder if I should stay up and wait for my title to be graded so that my salary will be higher. But it's really hard to improve my professional title.

### Case 3

**Interviewee:** Why do you choose to be a kindergarten teacher?

**C:** When I was a kid, my family was really poor. My mom and dad had no earning skills except farming. But my mom and dad firmly believed that education could change my fate, so even if they borrowed money from others, they wanted me to study.

I was not a smart kid, but I knew that the opportunity to study was very rare for me, so I studied hard. Fortunately, the final result was not bad, and I was admitted to an undergraduate college. But I didn't major in preschool education, I majored in finance. But I'm too introverted to deal with people, so I chose to become a kindergarten teacher after graduation. Just that time, the city's public kindergartens were looking for teachers, these teachers would be organized if they got the job. The job was an iron rice bowl, the benefits were pretty good, and I didn't have to worry about losing my job, so I applied for it. Fortunately, I got in, so I became a kindergarten teacher, until now.

**Interviewee:** What was your previous view of the kindergarten teaching profess

**C:** I used to think that kindergarten teachers had an easy job, coming in and out of work on time every day, and it was very stable.

**Interviewee:** What was your present view of the kindergarten teaching profession?

**C:** Since I became a kindergarten teacher myself, my perspective on the profession has changed dramatically. I remember two months after I started working, the school held a parent-teacher conference, hoping that teachers and parents could communicate well. I was excited and nervous, because I planned to talk about my teaching philosophy at the parent-teacher conference, hoping that I could communicate with parents effectively. As a result, no one cared about my teaching philosophy or the quality of my teaching at the parent-teacher conference. Parents only blamed the teacher for why their children did not have enough food, why their children drank less water, and why their children had injuries. That time, I realized that although the parents were polite to kindergarten teachers, they did not respect them from the

bottom of their hearts; they felt that the kindergarten teachers were just babysitters, taking care of their children. I was super tempted to leave my job, but I was still afraid to quit because of my family's finances.

**Interviewee:** What is the event or person in your career that has impressed you the most? Why?

**C:** Many of my colleagues treat their work irresponsibly. They think that the kindergarten curriculum is so simple that they don't need to prepare lessons in advance and just do whatever they want. But Ms. Li never thought of it that way. She believes that the job of a kindergarten teacher is very important because the students are like a blank sheet of paper and the teacher is the one who draws on the paper, so Ms. Li takes the job very seriously. She would prepare her lessons in advance and look for easy-to-understand teaching methods on the Internet. To improve her teaching level faster, she also actively participated in open classes. After class, she would play games and sing songs with her students and do her best to take care of them. Her serious working attitude infected me, and I began to take my work as seriously as she did. Slowly, I found that my teaching ability was getting stronger and stronger, my leaders and colleagues respected me more and more, my students liked me more and more, my parents respected me more and more, and I was often praised by my leaders.

**Interviewee:** Do you want to change your job? Why?

**C:** When I first started working, I wanted to quit every day because the salary was really low and the workload was huge. But now I don't want to quit. I'll work until I retire. Because I have been awarded the highest professional title, is a professor-level figure, all the teachers respect me, and my salary is quite high. I love my job and am proud of it.

#### Case 4

**Interviewee:** Why do you choose to be a kindergarten teacher?

**D:** My dad is a civil servant and my mom is a kindergarten teacher and they love me very much. Because my mom was a kindergarten teacher, I fantasized about this career. And I think I'm lively and cheerful, which makes me a good kindergarten teacher. Moreover, the state has enacted many policies that are beneficial to the development of the ECE industry, and I think the industry has a future.

**Interviewee:** What was your previous view of the kindergarten teaching profession?

**D:** I think being a kindergarten teacher is an easy job, stay with children every day and be happy every day. The salary is also good and the work is stable.

**Interviewee:** What was your present view of the kindergarten teaching profession? What led to such a change? Please describe in detail.

**D:** I majored in preschool education in college. I didn't realize how much I needed to learn for this major. I used to think that kindergarten teachers were easy, just taking care of kids, but that completely changed when I went into a kindergarten internship. In a public kindergarten, three teachers need to take care of more than 30 children, not only to teach, but also to take care of the children's food and drink, and sometimes they need to work overtime to do the environmental creation, which is too tiring.

I used to think it was easy to teach children, but I found it hard when I taught them. The knowledge that the child learns is very simple originally, you need to use simpler methods to teach a child, and this is difficult for me.

**Interviewee:** What is the event or person in your career that has impressed you the most? Why?

**D:** As kindergarten teachers, we will be the first teachers in a child's life, so we not only need to have patience, love, and responsibility but also need to have professional skills. I remember a child who would bring me snacks from home every time she bought something delicious to eat. I told her, "You don't have to bring them to me, you eat them yourself. But she said, "I like you, so I want to share my delicious snacks with you. When I heard her words, I couldn't stop my tears. It's too happy to be loved by students.

The only thing that makes me happy about working here is that my kids love me and their mom and dad respect me. When they learned that I was from Hunan province, the children's moms and dads even invited me to their home for dinner, fearing that I would feel lonely. Although I refused the parents' kindness, I appreciated it.

**Interviewee:** Do you want to change your job? Why?

**D:** Yes, I want to leave my job, but I'm afraid I won't be able to get into a public school teaching position if I do. After college, I was lucky enough to pass the test and go into the public kindergarten where I work now. My mom and dad were happy too. Because it's too hard to get in the public kindergarten now.

I was happy at first, but I'm now more and more tempted to leave my job and go back to Hunan. Because the workplace is in Jingmen, which is a small city and too far away from my home, I can only go home during winter and summer vacations a year, and I don't have any friends here, so I'd like to leave my job and take a new test for a public kindergarten in Hunan. I want to quit, but I'm torn because I'm afraid I won't be able to get into public kindergarten in my hometown if I leave.

I don't like my current work environment. The old teachers here were not very friendly to me. When I first came here, I asked a teacher for help with a teaching problem and he just said he didn't know and refused to help me. Then I asked another teacher for help and this teacher also refused to help me. I ended up looking up the solution online. I thought I was the only one being treated this way, but then I realized that the veteran teachers at this school treat all the new teachers the same way, they don't go out of their way to target us, but they don't offer us help either. The whole atmosphere of the school is bad.

Although I say that this kindergarten is low-paying, has a heavy workload, and is far away from my home, and I want to quit inside, I won't quit at the moment because I want to wait until I get my junior title before I consider quitting.

## Case 5

**Interviewee:** Why do you choose to be a kindergarten teacher?

**E:** My homeroom teacher gave me advice and let me choose the preschool education major. He felt that many undergraduates were reluctant to specialize in early childhood education industry after graduation, which was less stressful for me, easier to find a job, and more stable.

My mom, dad and I chose the major together. I love children very much. My mom and dad thought that it was a stable job and an easy job.

After graduation, I was directly assigned to the kindergarten where I work now, and I didn't change jobs during this period. At the beginning, I loved the job. After six months, I started to hate this job. I think this job is to be a babysitter for children, very annoying. But as my working years grew, I gradually fell in love with my job. Kindergarten teaching is a profession that not everyone can do well, and it is a profession that deserves respect.

**Interviewee:** What was your previous view of the kindergarten teaching profession?

**E:** I used to think that everyone could become a kindergarten teacher without the need to systematically learn specialized knowledge skills, but the opposite is true.

I used to think that everyone can become a kindergarten teacher, but do not need the system to learn professional knowledge. The salary is low and the working hours are long, but the job is stable and it is easy to find a husband.

**Interviewee:** What was your present view of the kindergarten teaching profession?

**E:** Actually, the work of kindergarten teachers is really tiring and hard, and the pay is still low, so it is really not worth it. You will realize it when you enter kindergarten yourself. I really love children, otherwise I wouldn't have lasted.

**Interviewee:** What is the event or person in your career that has impressed you the most? Why?

**E:** I met a very good kindergarten teacher at work. She is very personable and loved by both her students and coworkers. She is very good at teaching, and I have had the honor of listening to her open class, which is really very attractive. And every time the city organizes an open class competition, she basically wins an award. I used to think that anyone can become a kindergarten teacher because there is no skill in this profession. At that time I realized I was wrong. Since then, I took her as an example and firmly thought of becoming a good kindergarten teacher.

**Interviewee:** Do you want to change your job? Why?

**E:** I want to quit my job, but sometimes I want to wait and quit when I get my intermediate title. I'm bored with my current job, it's the same thing every day, it's not helping to improve my teaching skills, and I feel like I'm walking into a dead end.

## Case 6

**Interviewee:** Why do you choose to be a kindergarten teacher?

**F:** I didn't major in preschool education in college. The job I did after college was also a million miles away from teaching. But I love children, I think kindergarten teachers are noble and pure and plays an important role in our country. Only if kindergarten teachers are professional enough, preschool education will develop healthily. After graduation, I happened to see that a local kindergarten was recruiting teachers, I held the mentality to try to apply, did not expect to pass. I have been working as a kindergarten teacher until now.

**Interviewee:** What was your previous view of the kindergarten teaching profession?

**F:** I used to think that kindergarten work was easy, but when I became a kindergarten teacher, I realized that kindergarten work was really a lot, overtime work was common, and the workload was not proportional to the salary.

**Interviewee:** What was your present view of the kindergarten teaching profession?

**F:** I used to be a student and would not have any pressure. Now that I've become a teacher, I feel a lot of pressure. I'm afraid that I won't be able to teach well, and I'm afraid that parents won't like me, so I have a lot of mental pressure every day.

**Interviewee:** What is the event or person in your career that has impressed you the most? Why?

**F:** I find that many of my colleagues around me like to complain about the poor external environment of kindergartens, the lack of attention from the leaders, the lack of respect from parents to teachers, the low salary and so on, and use this as a reason to slack off in their work. Personally, I don't like complaining. Instead of complaining, I would rather use the time to complain to improve my work ability.

As I carefully polished every lesson I taught, my lessons became more and more popular with the students, which put pressure on other teachers. The other teachers disliked me and joined forces to ostracize me, but I never changed my work attitude. As I kept my serious working attitude all year round, this spirit gradually touched many colleagues, who began to admire and respect me from the bottom of their hearts, and the school leaders also recognized me.

I love interacting with children because their innocence and childish words are so healing to my heart. I also enjoy teaching children, and I hope they learn something in my classroom. If you love your children, you will make a good kindergarten teacher.

**Interviewee:** Do you want to change your job? Why?

**F:** I am not going to quit my job. Because I'm getting a good paycheck and my job is easy, both parents and teachers respect me and I'm happy working every day.

## Case 7

**Interviewee:** Why do you choose to be a kindergarten teacher?

**G:** I chose preschool education because I think it has a bright future. With the opening of the three-child policy, there are more and more children born, coupled with the state issued a lot of policies, will promote the development of early childhood education industry.

When I first entered college, I was confused because it was widely believed that anyone could be a kindergarten teacher and that it was not necessary to go to college for four years to become a kindergarten teacher. This was changed by my voice teacher, who made me realize that not everyone can be a good kindergarten teacher and that it is important to learn professional skills to be a good kindergarten teacher. For example, my voice teacher, Mr. Li, teaches children's songs, but he can make them lively and interesting. I hope I can be as good a teacher as he is.

**Interviewee:** What was your previous view of the kindergarten teaching profession?

**F:** I used to think that kindergarten teachers are an easy job, is a promising job. I thought I would be happy to be a kindergarten teacher and spend time with cute children every day, but the reality is that I need to wash the children's clothes and feed them, which is so different from what I thought before.

**Interviewee:** What was your present view of the kindergarten teaching profession?

**G:** I don't think kindergarten teachers are really just anyone. Kindergarten teachers not only need to have high professional skills, such as sing and dance, but also need to have professional knowledge. At the same time, they also need to have high emotional intelligence and be able to handle the relationship with parents well. Especially if two children are fighting, the kindergarten teacher has to communicate with both parents at the same time, which really tests the teacher's ability.

**Interviewee:** What is the event or person in your career that has impressed you the most? Why?

**G:** I have been recognized by my leaders and colleagues through my efforts. I will now purposefully study something and figure out what things I lack. For example, to make it easier for students to understand dozens plus several, through the Internet, I have found a variety of methods of explaining, then I have carefully watched every video to find out the most suitable method. I would also invite Mrs. Zhang to listen to my class and ask her to point out the problems and then I would correct them. I try my best to do well in every lesson, which helps me improve my teaching skills. In these 7 years, I have won many awards and I have become somewhat of a teacher in other people's mouths. Last month, I won the first prize in the Open Class Competition for Teachers organized by our school, I was really happy and felt that all my efforts were worthwhile.

**Interviewee:** Do you want to change your job? Why?

**G:** As I have only been in the job for four years, even though I'm underpaid, I have no intention of leaving the job. I want to take a kindergarten refresher course to enhance my professionalism and deepen my expertise in the field of kindergarten education. Then I want to obtain a high-level education certificate to prepare for future promotions.

## Case 8

**Interviewee:** Why do you choose to be a kindergarten teacher?

**H:** I love children, plus my personality is very lively and cute. My parents think I am very suitable to be a kindergarten teacher, that's what I thought. And the state has enacted a lot of policies favorable to the development of the early childhood industry, I think this industry has a promising future.

**Interviewee:** What was your previous view of the kindergarten teaching profession?

**H:** I used to think that kindergarten teaching was a respectable job and that it was easy. I spend time with children every day and should be happy every day.

**Interviewee:** What was your present view of the kindergarten teaching profession?

**H:** I used to think kindergarten teachers were respected, but they're not. Many parents don't respect teachers at all. Most parents think that kindergarten teachers are just people who take care of their children, and they think that it is enough for their children to have fun in kindergarten, and that they do not need to learn any cultural knowledge. However, when parents realize that their children are not learning as much culture as other children, they complain about the teachers, which makes me feel bad. I also think kindergarten teaching is an unskilled job that anyone can do. There are many skills that kindergarten teachers need to master. It is not well paid and the workload is heavy.

**Interviewee:** What is the event or person in your career that has impressed you the most? Why?

**H:** Once, the city held an open class competition for outstanding kindergarten teachers, and our school needed to send a teacher. Our director asked the children whose class they liked the most, and the children answered without hesitation: I like Teacher Wang's class the most. The students' answers directly warmed my heart. The director finally recommended me to participate in the open class competition, and I lived up to my expectations and won the first prize.

I feel like I'm getting what I paid for. I prepare for every lesson in advance and lead students to play different games to make them happy. I always encourage students to speak out their answers bravely, even if the answer is wrong. I don't criticize students casually. Every time I see my students actively participate in the class, I feel a sense of fulfillment.

**Interviewee:** Do you want to change your job? Why?

**H:** I wanted to quit because I felt that my chances of getting a promotion were slim, and I was tired of the job, mostly because I had lost my purpose, and I didn't know what it meant to be doing it.

## Case 9

**Interviewee:** Why do you choose to be a kindergarten teacher?

**J:** I didn't major in preschool education in college, but in management. After college, I worked as a clerk for one year and then quit to become a kindergarten teacher. Because I thought my personality

was too introverted and I didn't like dealing with people, I thought adults were too complicated. I like to communicate with children because they are simple and cute.

**Interviewee:** What was your previous view of the kindergarten teaching profession?

**J:** I used to think that kindergarten teachers had easy jobs, good pay, easy relationships, high social status, and people respected them.

**Interviewee:** What was your present view of the kindergarten teaching profession?

**J:** At the beginning, I loved the job. After six months, I started to hate this job. I think this job is to be a babysitter for children, very annoying. The kindergarten needs to do the environment creation every month, need to decorate classrooms beautifully, which is very headache for me. But as my working years grew, I gradually fell in love with my job. Kindergarten teaching is a profession that not everyone can do well, and it is a profession that deserves respect.

**Interviewee:** What is the event or person in your career that has impressed you the most? Why?

**J:** I led students to participate in the dance competition and won the second prize, I got the kindergarten director's and other teachers' praised, which greatly enhanced my self-confidence, and strengthened my determination to become a kindergarten teacher.

**Interviewee:** Do you want to change your job? Why?

**J:** I'm not going to change my job. I've been a kindergarten teacher for 24 years. I'm an expert teacher now. My colleagues and parents respect me, and the children like me. I think my life has been worth it.

The image features a large, faint watermark of the Rangsit University logo in the background. The logo is a circular emblem with a stylized flame or sunburst at the top, radiating lines in the middle, and a circular base. The text "มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต" (Mahavithayalai Rangsit) is written in Thai script along the bottom arc, and "Rangsit University" is written in English along the bottom arc.

**Appendix G**

**Certificate of Approval by Ethics Review Board of Rangsit University**



COA. No. RSUERB2023-204

**Certificate of Approval  
By  
Ethics Review Board of Rangsit University**

|                               |                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>COA. No.</b>               | <b>COA. No. RSUERB2023-204</b>                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Protocol Title</b>         | <b>The Development of Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Identity in Hubei, China</b>                                                                  |
| <b>Principle Investigator</b> | <b>Guohui Zhang</b>                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Affiliation</b>            | <b>Suryadhep Teachers College, Rangsit University</b>                                                                                                   |
| <b>How to review</b>          | <b>Expedited Review</b>                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Approval includes</b>      | <b>1. Project proposal</b><br><b>2. Information sheet</b><br><b>3. Informed consent form</b><br><b>4. Data collection form/Program or Activity plan</b> |
| <b>Date of Approval:</b>      | <b>15 December 2023</b>                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Date of Expiration:</b>    | <b>15 December 2025</b>                                                                                                                                 |

The prior mentioned documents have been reviewed and approved by Ethics Review Board of Rangsit University based Declaration of Helsinki, The Belmont Report, CIOMS Guideline and International Conference on Harmonization in Good Clinical Practice or ICH-GCP

Signature.....

(Associate Professor Dr. Panom Sanchanaaphum)

Chairman, Ethics Review Board for Human Research



Ethics Review Board of Rangsit University, 5th floor, Arthit Ourairat Building (Bldg.1) Rangsit University

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## Biography

|                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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