

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEANINGFUL WORK AND TURNOVER INTENTION OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF WORK MOTIVATION

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Abstract

This study is to evaluate the mediating role of work motivation in the relationship between meaningful work and turnover intention of preschool teachers, thereby contributing to clarifying the relationship between psychological factors and turnover intention of preschool teachers. The study used a descriptive cross-sectional survey method. Data were collected through a questionnaire including closed questions designed based on available scales. Random sampling technique was used to obtain 202 respondents. Statistical analysis software (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 26) was used to analyze the data to produce descriptiveness, hence Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (S.D) as well as regression. Findings showed that there is a direct effect of meaningful work on teachers' work motivation ($\beta = 0.2074$). Teachers who have a high perception of work value are often more motivated to work. There is no direct effect from meaningful work to turnover intention, and work motivation also does not have a mediating role in influencing this relationship. This study contributes to providing more scientific evidence on the awareness of factors related to preschool teachers' turnover intention as well as psychological factors that need to be considered in their professional activities.

Keywords: Meaningful work; Work motivation; Turnover intention; Preschool teachers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is necessary for human life and social development (Bhatta, 2009; Öztürk et al., 2022; Farswan, 2023). Education contributes to the formation and development of human personality (Balraj Singh, 2019), especially preschool education (Michelle, 2014; Dorji et al., 2020). Vietnam and many countries around the world consider education in general and children's education in particular to be a top national policy and attach importance to investment in this field (London, 2011; Tran et al., 2018).

Effective child education requires a scientific education program, appropriate educational conditions and environment, ... and especially a team of skilled teachers who love children and are committed to the profession (Jo' Hanna, 2003; Venetsanou & Kambas, 2010; Louw et al., 2011; Alexandra & Vassilis, 2018; Uljaevna & Shavkatovna, 2021; Shen et al., 2023; Hui et al., 2023). Teaching preschool children or any other job has its meanings and values. Awareness of the meaning or value of work affects work motivation, work participation, and commitment to the organization (Geldenhuis et al., 2014; Akgunduz et al., 2018; Mahalakshmi et al., 2020). When workers lack awareness of the meaning of work, it can lead to a lack of motivation, boredom at work, and intention to quit (Frank, 2018).

In recent years, Vietnam has faced an increasing number of preschool teachers quitting their jobs, this problem has been causing difficulties, as well as negative impacts on preschool education. young (Minh Phong, 2022; An Nguyen, 2022; Thong Nhat, 2022).

Many research topics on capacity and capacity development for preschool teachers (Nguyen, 2019; Huyen, 2021; Phuong et al., 2023; Nguyen, 2023), work motivation of preschool teachers (Quan, 2020; Trang, 2018; Nguyet, 2018;) has been carried out, but research on factors related to leaving and intention to leave of preschool teachers is quite limited, the relationship between intention Job satisfaction with intention to quit, as well as the mediating role of work motivation in preschool teachers have not been researched to clarify. Our research contributes to filling this gap. The study focuses on analyzing the mediating role of work motivation in the relationship between meaningful work and turnover intention of preschool teachers, thereby providing some recommendations for managers.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS AND RESEARCH MODEL

2.1. *Meaningful Work and Work Motivation*

Meaningful Work is an issue that has been researched a lot in psychology and human resource management (Allan et al., 2016; Allan et al., 2017; Arnoux-Nicolas et al., 2016; Bailey et al., 2017). Researchers have proposed many different conceptions of this concept: Park (2010) believes that work meaning is both a person's cognitive and emotional assessment of the presence of purpose and value in their life or work. According to Tummers and Knies (2013), meaningful work is an employee's perception of the complex system of goals in the organization and its relationship to their work or simply an assessment or experience. experience at work (Martela and Steger, 2016). Employee motivation is also an extremely important issue for the success of organizations (Kanfer et al., 2017). This is a complex concept, a collection of energies, both internal and external (Colquitt et al., 2015); Snowman et al. (2008) define motivation as the forces that lead to the arousal, selection, direction, and continuation of behavior. Gagne et al. (2015) evaluate work motivation in 5 aspects: motivation, external, introjected, and identified regulation, as well as intrinsic motivation. Many studies confirm that meaning at work is positively correlated with workers' work motivation, which can improve work motivation, job satisfaction, subjective well-being, performance, and organizational commitment (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017; Lavy & Bocker, 2018; Karataş & Özdemir, 2022). In the field of education, research by Fourie & Fourie & Deacon (2015) shows that meaningful work increases teachers' happiness, performance, and responsibility. When teachers have a positive attitude toward their profession, they will have energy to work (Granziera & Perera, 2019). Meaningful work can improve teachers' well-being and their ability to cope with stress (Minkinen et al., 2020).

2.2. *Work Motivation and Turnover Intention*

Turnover intention is an employee's plan to leave a job (Fenta et al., 2023). Intention to quit is a way for employees to withdraw from the organization when they find it no longer suitable (Bothma and Roodt, 2013). In the same vein, Dwivedi (2015) believes that intention to quit is a cognitive process that includes mental decisions before leaving a job at an organization. Studies have shown many different factors related to intention to leave work such as: health issues, promotion and learning opportunities (Wang et al., 2016); work stress (Yang et al., 2016); psychological capital, job burnout and social support (Chen et al., 2021) or high workload (Keno et al., 2021). According to Demirtas and Akdogan (2015), turnover is a consequence of turnover intention, it occurs when workers feel dissatisfied, leading to looking for alternative jobs and when they find that the new job is better than the current job. because they will leave the organization. In particular, many studies have shown that lack of work motivation is one of the main reasons why workers in general or teachers in particular intend to quit their current jobs (Ertas, 2015; Ahn et al., 2015; Imran et al., 2017; Li et al., 2022; Pham et al., 2021).

2.3. *Meaningful Work, Work Motivation and Turnover Intention*

In addition to studies showed the relationship between work meaning or work value and work motivation, the relationship between work motivation and employees' intention to quit is as described above. A number of other studies have analyzed and shown the relationship between work meaning, work motivation and intention to quit for workers in general and teachers in particular. Research by Madelyn and colleagues (2014) showed that meaningful work can bring satisfaction, work performance, commitment and loyalty to the organization. According to Frank et al. (2018), when workers lack awareness of the meaning and value of work, it can lead to lack of motivation to work, boredom at work and intention to quit. The results of the study by Geldenhuys et al. (2014) also confirmed that psychological meaningfulness has a positive relationship with work engagement and organizational commitment. Further, psychological meaningfulness predicts work engagement, psychological meaningfulness and work engagement predict organizational commitment. Research by Janik and Rothmann (2015) also showed that low psychological meaningfulness can impact intention to leave a job. Nicola and colleagues (2019), in a recent study, also identified that employee engagement and turnover intention are closely related to meaningful work.

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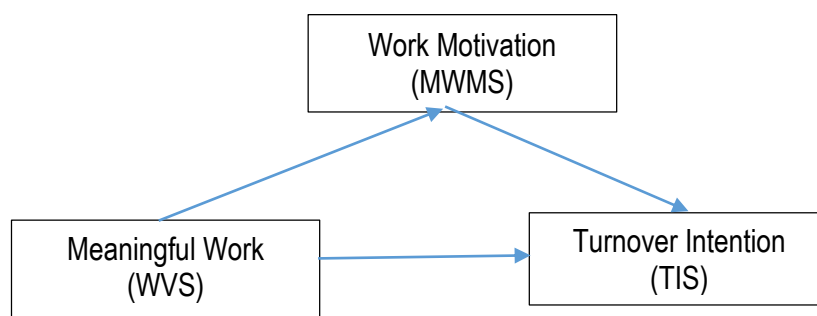


FIGURE 1 - PROPOSED RESEARCH MODEL

Our research focuses on proving the following hypotheses:

- H1. Meaningful work directly effects work motivation of preschool teachers.**
- H2. Work motivation directly effects turnover intention of preschool teachers.**
- H3. Meaningful work directly effects preschool teachers' turnover intention.**
- H4. Work motivation plays a mediating role in the relationship between meaningful work and turnover intention of preschool teachers.**

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. The sample

The sample of this study includes 202 teachers currently working in public and private preschool educational institutions in Ho Chi Minh City and some provinces in the Mekong Delta region. Subjects were randomly selected and volunteered to participate in the study. The sample size of 202 subjects meets the requirements for studies that perform EFA and regression analysis (Hair et al., 2014; Green & Salkind, 2003). In this study, we collect some information about the subjects' work seniority, monthly income, and professional qualifications.

3.2. Measures

The questionnaire consisted of meaningful work scale, work motivation scale, and turnover intention scale. The questionnaires were written in English initially and then translated into Vietnamese by the authors, using a back translation to ensure accuracy of the translation. The measuring scales were selected as described below.

3.3. Meaningful Work

The Work Values Scale – WVS (Elizur, Borg, Hunt, & Beck, 1991) includes 15 items that we used in this study to measure the value or meaning of work in 3 aspects: people-related, job outcomes, and the job itself. Participants rated their opinions on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 - strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The results of analyzing this survey data show that the scale has good reliability, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.973, and items all have a fairly high level of total correlation (Cronbach's Alpha from 0.424 to 0.919).

3.4. Work Motivation

We use the MWMS scale (The Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale) of Gagné et al. (2015). The MWMS, validated in seven languages, has become the most commonly used instrument for measuring work motivation. This 19-item scale assesses the five types of regulation proposed by SDT: motivation, external, introjected, and identified regulation, as well as intrinsic motivation. Participants were asked to evaluate whether they agreed with the statements describing their motivation at work on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The results of analyzing this survey data show that the scale has good reliability,

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Cronbach's Alpha = 0.925, and items all have a fairly high level of total correlation (Cronbach's Alpha from 0.475 to 0.716).

3.5. Turnover Intention

The TIS-6 scale includes 6 items from Bothma and Roodt (2013) used in this study to measure teachers' intention to leave. Participants were asked to evaluate whether they agreed with the statements describing feelings regarding their work on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Never/Very satisfying/Highly unlikely) to 5 (Always/dissatisfying/ Highly likely). The results of the first survey data analysis showed that the two items TI2 and TI6 had low total correlation coefficients. After removing TI6 from the scale. The results of the second analysis show that the scale ensures reliability, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.728, and all of the items have total correlation coefficients from 0.334 to 0.653.

3.6. Data analysis

Research data were analyzed using SPSS 26.0 software. First, Cronbach's Alpha and EFA analyses were conducted to check the reliability and validity of the scales. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, average scores, and Pearson correlations were calculated to describe the characteristics of the research sample and correlations between variables: work meaning, work motivation, and turnover intention. We use PROCESS Macro for SPSS to test the research hypotheses, and the bootstrapping method (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) is analyzed to evaluate the intermediate role of work motivation in the relationship between meaningful work and turnover intention.

4. 4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Characteristics of the study sample

Of the 202 preschool teachers participating in this study, data in Table 1 showed that 89 (44.1%) teachers have less than 5 years of experience, 85 (42.1%) have more than 5 - 10 years of experience. years and 28(13.9%) have worked for more than 15 years. Regarding professional qualifications, the majority of subjects have College degrees - 110 (54.5%), followed by University degrees - 61 (30.2%), Intermediate degrees - 22 (10.9%) and only 9 (4.5) % have a Master's degree. Most teachers currently have a monthly salary of over 5-10 million VND - 104(51.5). Quite a few teachers have a salary of less than 5 million VND and only 7 (3.5%) have a monthly income of over 15 million VND. We do not collect information about the gender of research subjects like many other studies because most preschool teachers in Vietnam are women.

TABLE 1 - THE DEMOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

		<i>n</i>	%
Seniority of work	Under 5 years	89	44.1
	Over 5 years - 10 years	85	42.1
	Over 15 years	28	13.9
	Total:	202	100
Qualification	Intermediate degree	22	10.9
	College degree	110	54.5
	University degree	61	30.2
	Master degree	9	4.5
	Total:	202	100
Monthly income	Under 5 million VND (Under 200\$)	91	45.0
	Over 5 million - 10 million VND (Over 200-400\$)	104	51.5
	Over 10 million VND (Over 400\$)	7	3.5
	Total:	202	100

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4.2. Check the reliability and validity of the scales

We performed Cronbach's Alpha and EFA analysis to test the reliability and validity of the scales based on survey data, the results are as follows:

TABLE 2 - THE RESULTS OF CRONBACH'S ALPHA ANALYSIS OF SCALES

Scales	Observed variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Meaningful Work (WVS)	15 items: WVS1, WVS2, WVS3, WVS4, WVS5, WVS6, WVS7, WVS8, WVS9, WVS10, WVS11, WVS12, WVS13, WVS14, WVS15	0.973 (no item has Alpha < 0.30)
Work Motivation (MWMS)	16 items: MWMS1, MWMS2, MWMS3, MWMS4, MWMS5, MWMS6, MWMS7, MWMS8, MWMS9, MWMS10, MWMS11, MWMS12, MWMS13, MWMS14, MWMS15, MWMS16	0.925 (no item has Alpha < 0.30)
Turnover Intention (TIS)	06 items: TIS1, TIS2, TIS3, TIS4, TIS5, TIS6	0.728 (after removed TIS6 , do Cronbach's Alpha of this item < 0.30)

TABLE 3 - KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.895
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	7177.456
	df	528
	Sig.	.000

TABLE 4 - TOTAL VARIANCE EXPLAINED

Component	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	11.576	35.077	35.077	11.576	35.077	35.077	10.812	32.762	32.762
2	5.259	15.937	51.014	5.259	15.937	51.014	4.387	13.293	46.055
3	3.177	9.626	60.641	3.177	9.626	60.641	4.222	12.794	58.850
4	2.475	7.501	68.141	2.475	7.501	68.141	2.652	8.038	66.887
5	2.157	6.538	74.679	2.157	6.538	74.679	2.571	7.792	74.679
6	.925	2.802	77.481						
7	.830	2.515	79.996						
8	.693	2.099	82.095						
9	.672	2.036	84.131						
10	.631	1.913	86.044						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The analysis results in Table 2 showed that the Meaningful Work scale and the Work Motivation scale have Cronbach's Alpha coefficient > 0.90 and no item has Alpha < 0.3. This result shows that these two scales have good reliability. All items of the scale are suitable for factor analysis. The Turnover Intention scale alone has a

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quite low Cronbach's Alpha value, due to the two items TIS2 and TIS6 having Cronbach's Alpha <0.30. We conducted a second analysis, this time we removed the TIS6 item from the scale, resulting in the coefficient of TIS2 increasing to 0.334 and the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the Turnover Intention Scale increasing to 0.728. Thus, after the second analysis, there are 36 observed variables of the 3 scales, all meeting the conditions for inclusion in factor analysis.

The author wanted to select quality observed variables so he used a loading factor threshold of 0.5. Factor analysis results in Table 2 and Table 3 showed that KMO = 0.895 > 0.5, sig Bartlett's Test = 0.000 < 0.05, so EFA exploratory factor analysis is appropriate. There are 5 factors extracted with the criterion eigenvalue greater than 1 with a total cumulative variance of 74.679%. There are 03 observed variables that were eliminated because they did not converge on these 05 factors, including variables: WVS12, MWMS10 and MWMS11. The remaining 33 observed variables converge into 05 factors:

- Factor 1 converges 14 observed variables measuring meaningful work, including: WVS1, WVS2, WVS3, WVS4, WVS5, WVS6, WVS7, WVS8, WVS9, WVS10, WVS11, WVS13, WVS14, WVS15.
- Factors 2,3,4 converge 14 observed variables measuring work motivation, including: MWMS1, MWMS2, MWMS3, MWMS4, MWMS5, MWMS6, MWMS7, MWMS8, MWMS9, MWMS12, MWMS13, MWMS14, MWMS15, MWMS16.
- Factor 5 converges 05 observed variables measuring turnover intention, including: TIS1, TIS2, TIS3, TIS4, TIS5.

4.3. Correlation analysis

The analysis results in Table 5 showed that Meaningful Work is positively correlated with Work Motivation ($r=.248, p<0.01$). This means that an increase in work meaning will lead to an increase in work motivation and vice versa. The data in the table shows that Meaningful Work and Work Motivation are negatively correlated with Turnover Intention ($r=-.055, r=-.032$) but are not statistically significant.

TABLE 5. - THE RESULTS OF CORRELATION ANALYSIS BETWEEN VARIABLES

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. Meaningful Work	3.7500	1.16233	1	.248**	-.055
2. Work Motivation	3.4576	.97140		1	-.032
3. Turnover Intention	2.2881	.64427			1

Notes: **: $p < 0,01$.

4.4. Testing hypotheses

The results of regression analysis in Table 6 showed that meaningful work has a direct effect on preschool teachers' work motivation ($p<0.05$). Thus, hypothesis H1 of this study is accepted. Our finding is supported by the research results of many authors: research by Frank et al. (2018) found that when workers lack awareness of the meaning and value of work, it can lead to a lack of work motivation. Many other studies also confirm that meaning at work is closely related to workers' work motivation, and it can improve work motivation (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017; Lavy & Bocker, 2018; Karataş & Özdemir, 2022). Work motivation does not directly effect teachers' turnover Intention ($p>0.05$). Thus, hypothesis H2 of this study is not accepted. The analysis results in Table 6 also showed that there is no direct impact from meaningful work on preschool teachers' turnover intention ($p>0.05$). With a confidence level of 95%, the analysis results give the value below BootLLCI (Lower-Level Confidence Interval) equal to -0.0239 and the value above BootULCI (Upper-Level Confidence Interval) equal to 0.0166. Confidence interval [-0.0239; 0.0166] includes the value 0, so there is no indirect impact from meaningful work on turnover intention through work motivation and also means that the work motivation variable does not have a mediating role. Time affects the relationship from meaningful work to turnover intention. With this result, hypotheses H3 and H4 are rejected. Our findings are different from the results of

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research on workers in general and teachers in particular by some authors: Research by Madelyn et al. (2014) confirmed a positive relationship between psychological meaningfulness, work engagement, and organizational commitment. Research by Nicola and colleagues (2019) also confirms meaningful work significant prediction variance in employee turnover intention. Karataş et al. (2022) found a positive, moderate, and significant relationship between meaningful work and job engagement.

TABLE 6 - THE RESULTS OF REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF TESTING HYPOTHESES

	β	SE	t	p	95%CI		
					LLCI	ULCI	
H1. Meaningful Work Work Motivation →	.2074	.0572	3.6230	.0004**	.0945	.3203	Accepted
H2. Work Motivation Turnover Intention →	-.0130	.0485	-.2676	.7893	-.1085	.0826	Not Accepted
H3. Meaningful Work Turnover Intention →	-.0276	.0405	-.6825	.4957	-.1075	.0522	Not Accepted
H4. Meaningful Work Work Motivation → Turnover Intention	-.0027	.0098			-.0239	.0166	Not Accepted

Note: **: $p < 0,01$; SE: Standard error; CI: Confidence interval.

5. CONCLUSIONS

From the results of quantitative research on 202 randomly selected preschool teachers in Vietnam on the mediating role of work motivation in the relationship between work meaning and their intention to quit. Our research results showed that there is a direct impact of meaningful work on teachers' work motivation. Teachers who have a high perception of work value are often more motivated to work. Survey results show that there is no direct impact from meaningful work to intention to quit, and work motivation also does not have a mediating role in influencing this relationship. From the results of this research, we believe that to promote the work motivation of preschool teachers, management levels need to focus on educating them about the meaning of work. Even though the analytical results of this study did not find a direct impact from meaningful work on intention to quit and the mediating role of work motivation. But to prevent the turnover of preschool teachers in the current context, management levels also need to pay attention to motivating them to work.

6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted on a small sample; if conducted on a larger sample, it would help draw more solid and reliable conclusions. This study only focuses on analyzing the relationship between meaningful work, work motivation, and turnover intention, so it does not provide managers with a comprehensive view of managing the work attitudes of preschool teachers.

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