



# Influence of Early Childhood Teachers' Occupational Stress on Their Resignation Intention in Guangzhou, China: The Mediating Role of Mental Health

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## Abstract

*The purposes of this study were to analyze the relationship between occupational stress and the resignation intention of early childhood teachers and to explore the mediating role of mental health in the occupational stress and resignation intention of early childhood teachers. The population of this study was 300 early childhood teachers in Guangzhou City, China. A stratified random sampling method was used to select one public kindergarten, one private kindergarten, and one international kindergarten from each of the 11 districts in Guangzhou City, and 10 teachers from each kindergarten. The occupational stress questionnaire, SCL-90 scale and resignation intention scale were used as the research instruments. The researcher used SPSS for Pearson correlation coefficient analysis, and mediation model analysis on questionnaire data.*

*The results of the study showed that 1) occupational stress negatively impacted teachers' mental health, 2) occupational stress significantly positively impacted teachers' resignation intention, 3) teachers' mental health negatively impacted teachers' resignation intention, and 4) there was a mediating effect of mental health on the relationship between occupational stress and resignation intention.*

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Teachers, Occupational Stress, Resignation Intention, Mental Health

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## 1. Introduction

Children have a direct and continuous relationship with their teachers from the time they enter their first early childhood education institution. Therefore, teachers' mental health can directly affect young children's physical and mental development. Occupational stress has long been recognized as an important contextual factor affecting teachers' mental health and professional stability. Research in this area has been conducted primarily in urban settings and is largely based on cross-sectional data, with early studies showing that the mental health of early childhood teachers is mostly good or well, with low levels of occupational stress and consequent mental health problems among early childhood teachers (Thomason & La Paro, 2013). In the last decade, however, a growing body of literature has shown that occupational stress among early childhood teachers has been increasing (Xu, 2017; Wang et al., 2015). In the same period, the literature also mentions that the turnover rate of early childhood teachers is also increasing (Bassok et al., 2021; Hong et al., 2021).

Previous research has found that occupational stress does lead to some mental health problems among teachers (Darius et al., 2021; Pang et al., 2003), and some studies have shown that early childhood teachers with high levels of occupational stress (Boyd et al., 2011) and poor mental health are more likely to have thoughts of leaving their jobs (Stauffer & Mason, 2013), but some studies suggest that occupational stress is not the only factor causing staff to leave their jobs. The fact is that not everyone quits their job because of stress, most people are under occupational stress but keep working. Therefore, the relationship between occupational stress, the mental health of early childhood teachers, and their resignation intentions is the concern of this dissertation.

The cultural backgrounds of Western countries are somewhat different from that of China, so some of the explanations for the causes of teachers' occupational stress may not apply to China. Therefore, the relationship between the variables related to occupational stress among early childhood teachers needs more empirical research to explore its exactness. In terms of subjects, most of the literature on mental health has focused on healthcare workers, military personnel, and university teachers, with less attention paid to the mental health of early childhood teachers than primary

and secondary school teachers and university teachers. In terms of content, the literature on mental health has focused on the relationship between mental health and illnesses, such as anxiety, depression, insomnia, hypertension, heart disease, and diabetes. Most of these studies are medical literature, and the mental health of early childhood teachers is mostly treated as an independent or dependent variable in the research, with less literature using mental health as a mediating variable. Among the many factors that contribute to early childhood teacher turnover, more empirical research is needed on which factors have an impact on early childhood teachers' resignation intention from the organizational management perspective.

Guangzhou is a large, world-class city, and the issue of occupational stress among early childhood teachers in the region deserves researchers' attention. This study will analyze the relationship between occupational stress and the resignation intention of early childhood teachers and explore the mediating role of mental health in the occupational stress and resignation intention of early childhood teachers.

## 2. Literature Reviews

### 2.1 The Relationship between Occupational Stress and Mental Health among Early Childhood Teachers

Researchers have focused mostly on the relationship between stress and psychological subhealth problems such as depression and anxiety in the literature discussing the relationship between occupational stress and the mental health of early childhood teachers (Lopes & Oliveira, 2021; Henry et al., 2021), and researchers have collectively found that more stressed teachers have more psychological problems (Darius et al, 2021; Pang et al., 2003), such as anxiety and depression. Mental health problems due to stress are particularly among teachers who are married, have children, and have chronic illnesses or family members with chronic illnesses (Santamaría et al., 2021). A cross-sectional study of early childhood teachers' mental health problems found that the level of mental health level among early childhood teachers in China has been decreasing and mental problems increasing year by year (Wang et al., 2013). Among the available data, 22.17% of early childhood teachers in Guangxi Province, China, may have more than moderate mental health

problems (Yu & Li, 2003); 16.6% in Shanxi Province (Wang & Xing, 2002); 14.4% in Guangdong Province and 74% (Wang et al., 2017); in Guangzhou City (Liu et al., 2021). Among these teachers with psychological disorders, the main externalizing manifestations were somatization, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive and depressive symptoms (Song, 2015). All these studies can indicate that occupational stress has a direct impact on teachers' mental health.

## **2.2 The Relationship between Teachers' Occupational Stress and Resignation Intentions**

Many studies have supported the idea that teacher stress is negatively related to career commitment (Green et al., 2001; Steptoe & Kivimäki, 2013) and positively related to resignation intentions (Jepson & Forrest, 2006; Klassen & Chiu, 2011).

Studies have found that occupational stress tends to have an impact on resignation intentions through several mediators, the most common mediator being illness (Schaack et al., 2022; Huang et al., 2020). Many of the illnesses used as mediating variables in the literature are chronic and associated with occupational stress (McCormick et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2021). Therefore, the results could explain the lower turnover rate of teachers in public kindergartens compared to private kindergartens (Loeb et al., 2017).

In summary, a large amount of literature demonstrates that occupational stress had significant relationship with teacher resignation intentions in preschool education. Although no accurate data indicates an absolute causal relationship between occupational stress and teachers' resignation intentions, most of the literature suggests that teacher turnover is the result of multiple factors and that occupational stress, in combination with other variables, indirectly influences teachers' resignation intentions.

## **2.3 The relationship between Early Childhood Teachers' Mental Health and resignation intentions**

Much of the literature refers to the overemphasis on teaching quality and teacher accountability in kindergartens (Paschall et al., 2015), with little or no emphasis on the working environment and physical and mental health of teachers (Puskás &

Andersson, 2021; Nehez et al., 2022). Mental health has been shown to correlate with resignation intentions. Nearly one-quarter of early childhood teachers in the United States suffer from clinically severe levels of depression, and more than half of these teachers cannot continue teaching because of a variety of depressive symptoms (Whitaker et al., 2015; Brown et al., 2002). Some researchers have suggested that emotional health is an important indicator of teachers' career stability and that emotionally healthy teachers have higher career stability (Burns & Machin, 2013; Collie et al., 2011; McGinty et al., 2008), in contrast, teachers with poor mental health have varying degrees of burnout (Burns & Machin, 2013; Schonfeld & Bianchi, 2016), and have strong feelings of anxiety, frustration, and helplessness (Bergström et al., 2018), which they mostly escape by applying for a transfer or leaving their jobs (Kwon et al., 2021; Neuenschwander et al, 2017; Cao, 2012).

In summary, researchers have collectively found a correlation between the mental health status of early childhood teachers and their resignation intentions. Physical illness due to mental health is a significant cause of teachers leaving or having thoughts of leaving.

### **3. Research Objectives**

The main objectives of this study were to explore the relationship between occupational stress, mental health, and resignation intention among early childhood teachers in Guangzhou, China and to determine the impact of occupational stress on the mental health of early childhood teachers and their resignation intention, with the following objectives:

1. To determine the relationship between occupational stress, mental health, and resignation intention among early childhood teachers in Guangzhou, China.
2. To determine whether mental health mediates the relationship between occupational stress and resignation intention among early childhood teachers in Guangzhou, China.

## 4. Research and Data Analysis

### 4.1 Research Methodology

The researcher perform the Pearson correlation coefficient test and mediation model test by used sing SPSS and Amos software:  $\text{sig} < 0.05$  was statistically significant;  $|r| < 0.4$  was a low linear correlation,  $0.4 \leq |r| \leq 0.7$  was a general correlation, and  $0.7 \leq |r| \leq 1$  was a high linear correlation. For regression analysis, regression coefficient B and significance level (sig) were observed:  $\text{sig} < 0.05$  then the data were statistically significant.

### 4.2 Research Instruments

The scales used in this dissertation were the Occupational Stress Questionnaire for early childhood teachers developed by Alatan and Liu (2014), the SCL-90 Scale developed by Derogatis et al. (1976) and the Resignation Intentions Scale developed by Weisberg and Sagine (1999).

### 4.3 Reliability and Validity

The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the four dimensions of the Occupational Stress Questionnaire for Early Childhood Teachers: job difficulty and challenge, job responsibility and compensation, job intensity, and management system and career development were 0.824, 0.797, 0.855, and 0.809, the overall alpha coefficient of the scale was 0.921. The SEM analysis showed that the GFI = 0.865, CFI = 0.928, NFI = 0.901, TLI = 0.917, and IFI = 0.930, The results showed that the Occupational Stress Questionnaire for Early Childhood Teachers had good structural stability and the data fit the model well.

The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the SCL-90 Scale for the 10 dimensions: somatization was 0.827, obsessive-compulsive symptoms was 0.807, interpersonal sensitivity was 0.885, depression was 0.866, anxiety was 0.897, hostility was 0.874, terror was 0.847, paranoia was 0.801, psychotic was 0.708, and other was 0.763, the overall alpha coefficient of the scale was 0.976. The SEM analysis showed that the GFI = 0.846, CFI = 0.838, NFI = 0.814, IFI = 0.821, RMSEA = 0.070, RMR = 0.046. Through the fit indices of the model, the structure of the Symptom Self-Rating Scale was reasonable, and the data fit the model.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the Resignation Intention Scale was: 0.838; the SEM analysis showed that the GFI = 1.00, CFI = 1.00, NFI = 1.00, IFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.000, RMR = 0.000, The results showed that the Resignation Intention Scale was well designed with good reliability and validity, and the data fit the model well.

#### 4.4 Population

The overall population of this study was all working kindergarten teachers in Guangzhou City, China. There are currently 11 districts in Guangzhou City, and the researcher stratified a random sampling method to select one public kindergarten, one private kindergarten, and one inclusive kindergarten from each of the 11 districts in Guangzhou City. During the survey, 2 teachers of junior classes in private kindergartens, 1 teacher of middle classes in inclusive kindergartens, and one teacher of senior classes in inclusive kindergartens dropped out of the survey, while the remaining 326 teachers completed the survey, with a return rate of 98.8%. Inclusion criteria for the survey population: 1) having a kindergarten teacher qualification; 2) early childhood teachers working in teaching positions (excluding nursing staff and administrative staff; 3) voluntary participation in this survey. Survey respondents gave informed consent to participate in this survey. A total of 40 male and 286 female kindergarten teachers participated in the survey. The mean age of the teachers tested was 29.89 years ( $M = 29.89$ ,  $SD = 6.151$ ), with an age range of 21-47 years.

### 5. Results and Findings

**Research Objective 1: To determine the relationship between occupational stress, mental health, and resignation intention among early childhood teachers in Guangzhou, China.**

The researchers first conducted a descriptive statistical and correlational analysis of early childhood teachers' occupational stress, mental health, and resignation intention.

**Table 1 Correlation analysis of Occupational Stress, Mental Health and Resignation Intention**

	1	2	3
1. Occupational Stress	-		
2. Mental Health	.557**	-	
3. Resignation Intention	0.074*	0.083*	-

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01

According to Table 1: the correlation coefficients between occupational stress, mental health and resignation intention all showed significance (p<0.05). There are 10 dimensions of mental health, and Table 2 shows the correlation between the 10 dimensions of mental health and occupational stress.

**Table 2 Correlation Analysis of Occupational Stress and 10 Dimensions of Mental Health**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Occupational Stress	-											
2. Somatization	.482**	-										
3. Obsessive	.571**	.849**	-									
4. Interpersonal sensitivity	.385**	.781**	.611**	-								
5. Depression	.460**	.860**	.724**	.901**	-							
6. Anxiety	.496**	.672**	.728**	.778**	.845**	-						
7. Hostility	.271**	.482**	.429**	.723**	.672**	.740**	-					
8. Terror	.240**	.500**	.474**	.726**	.705**	.799**	.867**	-				
9. Paranoia	.249**	.525**	.465**	.768**	.722**	.752**	.824**	.883**	-			
10. Psychotic	.195**	.469**	.402**	.698**	.660**	.679**	.780**	.835**	.829**	-		
11. Other	.533**	.734**	.728**	.771**	.825**	.844**	.798**	.749**	.720**	.672**	-	
12. Mental Health	.557**	.839**	.783**	.910**	.941**	.915**	.814**	.842**	.838**	.778**	.909**	-

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01

According to Table 2: the correlation coefficients between occupational stress and mental health dimensions showed significance ( $p=0.000<0.05$ ).

Next, the relationship between each dimension of occupational stress and mental health was analyzed and the result showed in Table 3:

**Table 3 Correlation analysis of Mental Health and 4 Dimensions of Occupational Stress**

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Job Difficulty and Challenges	-				
2. Job Responsibilities and Compensation	.400**	-			
3. Work Intensity	.358**	.567**	-		
4. Management System and Career Development	.308**	.650**	.564**	-	
5. Mental Health	.302**	.525**	.389**	.465**	-

\* $p<0.05$ , \*\* $p<0.01$ .

From Table 3, the correlation coefficients between all 4 dimensions of occupational stress and mental health showed significance. It indicates that there is a significant correlation between each dimension of occupational stress and mental health. Next, a regression analysis of each dimension of occupational stress and mental health was conducted, the result showed in Table 4:

**Table 4 Summary of Occupational Stress and Mental Health Regression Analysis Model**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> variation	F variation	Sig
1	.581a	0.338	0.308	0.309	36.299	0.000

a Predicted variable : (constant), Job Difficulty and Challenges, Job Responsibilities and Compensation, Work Intensity, Management System and Career Development

Table 4 showed that occupational stress had a significant effect ( $P=0.000<0.01$ ) on mental health after controlling for variables such as age, gender, education, teaching grade, teaching experience, teachers' income, and type of kindergarten, and the specific regression coefficients were showed in Table 5 :

**Table 5 Each Dimensions of Occupational Stress and Mental Health Regression Coefficient**

Model		Standardization coefficient Beta	t	Sig
(constant)			7.812	0.000
1	Job Difficulty and Challenges	0.087	1.669	0.096
	Job Responsibilities and Compensation	0.363	5.359	0.000
	Work Intensity	0.056	0.920	0.358
	Management System and Career Development	0.189	2.933	0.004

a Dependent variable: Mental Health

Among the 4 dimensions of occupational stress, job responsibility and compensation, management system and career development had a significant effect on mental health. Job difficulty and challenges, job intensity did not have a significant effect on mental health. Researcher did a correlation analysis between occupational stress and resignation intention and the result showed in Table 6.

**Table 6 Correlation analysis of Resignation Intention and Occupational Stress**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Job Difficulty and Challenges	-					
2. Job Responsibilities and Compensation	.400**	-				
3. Work Intensity	.358**	.567**	-			
4. Management System and Career Development	.308**	.650**	.564**	-		
5. Occupational Stress	.892**	.716**	.650**	.633**	-	
6. Resignation Intention	0.079*	0.075*	0.037*	0.052*	0.074*	-

\* $p<0.05$ , \*\* $p<0.01$ .

According to Table 6: The correlation coefficients between each dimension of occupational stress and resignation intention showed significance ( $r = 0.074$ ), the four dimensions: job difficulty and challenge ( $r = 0.079$ ); job responsibility and compensation ( $r = 0.075$ ); work intensity ( $r = 0.037$ ); and management system and career development ( $r = 0.052$ ) showed significant correlation with the resignation intention. Therefore, there is significant correlation between occupational stress and resignation intention. Next, the correlation between each dimension of mental health and resignation intention was further analyzed and the result showed in Table 7:

**Table 7 Correlation analysis of Resignation Intention and Mental Health**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Somatization	-											
2. Obsessive-compulsive symptoms		.849**	-									
3. Interpersonal sensitivity			.781**	.611**	-							
4. Depression				.860**	.724**	.901**	-					
5. Anxiety					.672**	.728**	.778**	.845**	-			
6. Hostility						.482**	.429**	.723**	.672**	.740**	-	
7. Terror							.500**	.474**	.726**	.705**	.799**	.867**
8. Paranoia								.525**	.465**	.768**	.722**	.752**
9. Psychotic									.824**	.883**	-	
10. Other										.829**	-	
11. Mental Health											.909**	-
12. Resignation Intention												.137*

\* $p<0.05$ , \*\* $p<0.01$ .

According to Table 7: Significant correlation between resignation intention and somatization, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, depression, and paranoia, (somatization  $r = 0.137$ , obsessive-compulsive  $r = 0.121$ , depression  $r = 0.126$ , paranoia  $r = 0.109$ ,  $p = 0.000<0.05$ ), indicating that the resignation intention had significant correlation with mental health.

The next is a regression analysis of the 4 dimensions of somatization, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, depression, and paranoia with resignation intention and the result showed in Table 8:

**Table 8 Summary of 4 Dimensions of Mental Health and Resignation Intention Regression Analysis Model**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> variation	F variation	Sig
1	.491b	0.241	0.214	0.007	3.102	0.046
2	.491c	0.241	0.212	0.000	0.164	0.036
3	.492d	0.242	0.210	0.000	0.056	0.023
4	.494e	0.244	0.210	0.002	0.819	0.027

a Predicted variable: (constant), somatization

b Predicted variable : (constant), somatization, Obsessive-compulsive symptoms

c Predicted variable : (constant), somatization, Obsessive-compulsive symptoms, depression

d Predicted variable : (constant), somatization, Obsessive-compulsive symptoms, depression, paranoia

According to Table 8: regression coefficients between resignation intention and somatization ( $p = 0.046 < 0.05$ ), obsessive-compulsive symptoms ( $p = 0.036 < 0.05$ ), depression ( $p = 0.023 < 0.05$ ) and paranoia ( $p = 0.027 < 0.05$ ) showed significance, indicating that there was significant effect of mental health on resignation intention.

**Research Objective 2: To determine whether mental health mediates the relationship between occupational stress and resignation intention among early childhood teachers in Guangzhou, China.**

For the second research objective, the independent variable is occupational stress, and the dependent variable is resignation intention, and the results of the regression analysis between occupational stress and resignation intention are shown in Table 9 :

**Table 9 Summary of Occupational Stress and Resignation Intention Regression Analysis Model**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> variation	F variation	Sig
1	.484b	0.255	0.207	0.021	0.313	0.026

a Predicted variable : (constant), Occupational Stress

According to Table 9: After controlling for irrelevant variables, the p value was  $0.026 < 0.05$ , indicating that occupational stress does significantly affect the resignation intention. There is a significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

Next, the researcher will conduct a stratified regression analysis to determine whether there is a mediating effect on mental health and the result were shown in Table 10:

**Table 10 Mediating Effects of Mental Health**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> variation	F variation	Sig
1	.572b	0.327	0.303	0.004	0.047	0.026
2	.575c	0.330	0.298	0.003	0.410	0.019

a Predicted variable : (constant),Occupational Stress

b Predicted variable : (constant), Occupational Stress,Obsessive-compulsive symptoms, Interpersonal sensitivity, Depression, Paranoia

According to Table 10: Model 1 is the regression analysis of occupational stress and resignation intention, and model 2 adds the mediating variable of mental health to model 1.

**Table 11 Mental Health and Occupational Stress Regression Coefficient**

model		Standardization coefficient Beta	t	Sig
1	(constant)		15.698	0.000
	Occupational Stress	0.061	0.517	0.026
2	(constant)		12.534	0.000
	Occupational Stress	0.044	0.434	0.042
	Somatization	0.014	0.111	0.012
	Obsessive-compulsive symptoms	0.042	0.405	0.046
	Depression	0.047	0.394	0.034
	Paranoia	0.031	0.437	0.022

a Dependent variable : Resignation Intention

According to Table 10 and 11: After controlling for irrelevant variables, the researcher added occupational stress to model 1, the change in the F value of model 1 showed significance ( $p = 0.026 < 0.05$ ), indicating that occupational stress does significantly affect the resignation intention. Model 2 adds mediating variables to model 1. After adding the mediating variables, the regression coefficient of occupational stress on resignation intention decreases but the regression coefficient is still significant ( $p = 0.042 < 0.05$ ), indicating that mental health plays a partially mediating role.

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

### Discussion

This section discusses the results of this study and relates them to the contents of the literature review. This section also discusses the consistency of the findings with previous studies.

For the first research objective, the correlation coefficient between occupational stress and mental health showed significance, and correlation coefficients between resignation intention and mental health showed significance as well, the correlation analysis of occupational stress, resignation intention, and mental health showed that there was a negative correlation between occupational stress and mental health, a negative correlation between mental health and resignation intention, and a significant positive correlation between occupational stress and resignation intention. The regression analysis showed that 2 dimensions of occupational stress had significant negative effects on mental health; these two are job responsibility and compensation, the management system and career development. Regression analysis also showed the significance of somatization, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, depression, and paranoia on resignation intention was less than 0.05, and it was concluded that responsibility and compensation, the management system has a significant negative effect on mental health, mental health had a significant negative correlation with resignation intention, and after excluding the control variables, somatization, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, depression and paranoia still have a significant effect on resignation intention. All four dimensions of occupational stress significantly impacted resignation intentions. For the second

research objective, in the mediating effect model, the change in the F-value of the independent variable (occupational stress) and the dependent variable (resignation intention) showed significance, implying that occupational stress has a significant effect on resignation intention. After adding the mediating variables, the regression coefficient of occupational stress on resignation intention decreases but the regression coefficient is still significant, indicating that mental health plays a partially mediating role.

The results of this study showed that the correlation coefficients between occupational stress and mental health showed significant, the more occupational stress teacher felt, the worse mental health they have. The result is the same or like other researchers (Whitaker et al., 2015; Brown et al., 2002 Bergström et al., 2018), with researchers reporting most frequently the relationship between occupational stress and anxiety and depression, researchers declared the more serious anxiety and depression, the worse mental health (Song, 2015; Lopes & Oliveira, 2021; Henry et al., 2021). It is worth noticing that “somatization” on the SCL-90 scale primarily reflects physical discomfort, including cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, respiratory, and other systemic discomforts, and somatic discomfort manifestations such as headache, back pain, and muscle aches. The “other” item mainly reflects sleep problems and diet problems. The results of this study showed that somatization symptoms and sleep problems and diet problems were moderately positively associated with occupational stress. It was the same as the results reported by other researchers (Bartels et al., 2021; Linton et al., 2015; Åkerstedt, 2006; Yaginuma-Sakurai et al., 2020). Common factors are sleep duration (Bartels et al., 2021; Linton et al., 2015) and sleep quality (Åkerstedt, 2006; Yaginuma-Sakurai et al., 2020), followed by obesity due to overeating (Randall et al., 2021), suggesting that occupational stress can indirectly affect mental health by influencing teachers’ physiological status.

The study also found that there was a significant correlation between occupational stress and resignation intention among early childhood teachers, which is consistent with the results of some previous studies that have suggested that occupational stress significantly affects resignation intention (Jepson & Forrest, 2006; Klassen & Chiu, 2011). the previous study such as Jepson and Forrest (2006) focused on a group of teachers with high levels of occupational stress, and when occupational stress significantly exceeds the acceptable range for an individual, there is a significant

resignation intention for individuals. The study by Klassen and Chiu,(2011) focused on 2 groups of teachers which were in-service teachers and pre-service teachers. The resignation intention was significantly higher for in-service teachers than for pre-service teachers because occupational stress was significantly higher for in-service teachers than for pre-service teachers. It has also been suggested that it is not the occupational stress itself that causes teachers to leave, but rather the various physiological (Truman & Woods, 2001; Lamers et al., 2011; Rodenburg et al., 2020) or psychological factors (Boyd et al., 2011; Stauffer & Mason, 2013) that course by occupational stress. The additional workload from others' absences due to illness also course teachers to quit (Sönmez & Betül, 2021; Jeon et al., 2019) because the constant stacking of workloads can lead to teachers being overwhelmed and leaving the profession. There is also literature that had opposite results of this dissertation, for example, some studies found that controlling for factors such as gender and income, occupational stress does not have a significant effect on resignation intention (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015; Lambert et al., 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Čecho et al.,2019).

This study found that mental health partially mediated the relationship between occupational stress and resignation intention. There is not the same result in the prior literature, but many similar or related pieces of literature support the findings of this study. Previous studies have suggested that employees' mental health at work mediates between occupational stress and resignation intention (Xiong, 2019), and some studies proved that occupational stress affects burnout through mental health (Fan, 2016; Li et al., 2007; Li, 2014), and burnout is a significant predictor variable of resignation intention, so it can be indirectly proved that mental health plays a role in the relationship between occupational stress and resignation intention, and mental health partially mediates the relationship between occupational stress and resignation intention.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between occupational stress, mental health, and resignation intention among early childhood teachers in Guangzhou, China and to determine the impact of occupational stress on the mental health of early childhood teachers and their resignation intention, The findings of this dissertation are as follows.

For the first research objective, the correlation analysis of occupational stress, resignation intention, and mental health showed that there was a negative correlation between occupational stress and mental health, a negative correlation between mental health and resignation intention, and a significant positive correlation between occupational stress and resignation intention. The regression analysis showed that 2 dimensions of occupational stress had significant negative effects on mental health, these two are responsibility and compensation, the management system and career development. Regression analysis also showed the significance of somatization, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, and depression on resignation intention was less than 0.05, and it was concluded that responsibility and compensation, the management system has a significant negative effect on mental health, and after excluding the control variables, somatization, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, depression, and paranoia still have a significant effect on resignation intention.

For the second research objective, in the mediating effect model, the change in the F-value of the independent variable (occupational stress) and the dependent variable (resignation intention) showed significance, implying that occupational stress has a significant effect on resignation intention. After adding the mediating variables, the regression coefficient of occupational stress on resignation intention decreases but the regression coefficient is still significant, indicating that mental health plays a partially mediating role. The results were obtained: there is a mediating effect of mental health between occupational stress and resignation intention among early childhood teachers in Guangzhou, China.

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