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**THE EFFECTS OF TEACHING MOTIVATION,
TEACHING PERCEPTIONS AND PROFESSIONAL
IDENTITY ON CAREER CHOICE SATISFACTION
AMONG PRE-SERVICE PRESCHOOL TEACHERS
IN FUJIAN PROVINCE OF CHINA**



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SHEN LIJUAN

UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS

2023



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AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY ON CAREER CHOICE SATISFACTION
AMONG PRE-SERVICE PRESCHOOL TEACHERS IN FUJIAN
PROVINCE OF CHINA

SHEN LIJUAN

THESIS PRESENTED TO QUALIFY FOR A DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

2023



**INSTITUT PENGAJIAN SISWAZAH /
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DR. LOY CHEE LUEN
Associate Professor
Department of Early Childhood Education
Faculty of Human Development
Sultan Idris Education University

(Tandatangan Penyelia / Signature of Supervisor
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APPRECIATION

Four years of doctoral work have passed in a flash. Looking back, I can still see the years that have passed. I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all those who have helped and encouraged me over the past four years and to express my most sincere thanks.

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ABSTRACT

In light of the severe attrition of rural preschool teachers in China, there is a growing concern regarding the career choice satisfaction of pre-service preschool teachers in local universities of China under the Government-funded Teacher Education Policy (hereinafter referred to as PPTGFTEPLUC). This study aims to investigate the effects of teaching motivation, perceptions about teaching, and professional identity on the career choice satisfaction of PPTGFTEPLUC. This study extends the model of Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice Scale). It empirically examines the effects of each dimension of teaching motivation and perceptions about teaching on career choice satisfaction and the mediating effect of professional identity. Mixed methods were employed in this study to validate the proposed framework, and qualitative data supported quantitative data interpretation. Employing a stratified sampling technique, data gathered from a sample of 508 pre-service preschool teachers through the web survey method were analyzed using SPSS 22 and SmartPLS 3.3.9. Three instruments employed were the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice Scale, Student Teacher Professional Identity Scale, and teacher interest Scale. Descriptive analysis and inferential analysis were used to analyze the data. The findings showed that perceived teaching abilities (PTA) ($p=0.017<0.05$), personal utility value (PUV) ($p=0.001<0.05$), teacher interest (TI) ($p=0.041<0.05$), task demand (TD) ($p=0.026<0.05$) and professional identity (PI) ($p=0.000<0.05$), significantly have positive influence on career choice satisfaction (CCS), while fallback career (FC) significantly, has negative effects on career choice satisfaction (CCS) ($p=0.042<0.05$). In addition, the result showed that professional identity (PI) ($p=0.048<0.05$) is a complete mediator in the relationship between socialisation influences (SNI) and career choice satisfaction (CCS). Professional identity (PI) ($p=0.000<0.05$) is a partial mediator in the relationship between teacher interest (TI) and career choice satisfaction (CCS), and it is also a partial mediator in the relationship between task return (TR) and career choice satisfaction (CCS) ($p=0.000<0.05$). Thus, the implication of this study provides empirical evidence for the collective effects of teaching motivation, perceptions about teaching and professional identity, and the independent effects of each dimension of TM, PT. Building upon the present study's findings, future research could explore additional factors influencing career choice satisfaction among PPTGFTEPLUC. Moreover, longitudinal studies could be conducted to investigate how these variables evolve and interact over time, providing valuable insights into the dynamic nature of career choice satisfaction in the context of pre-service preschool teachers.

**KESAN MOTIVASI PENGAJARAN, PERSEPSI PENGAJARAN,
DAN IDENTITI PROFESIONAL TERHADAP KEPUASAN PILIHAN
KERJAYA DI KALANGAN GURU PRA-PERKHIDMATAN
PRASEKOLAH DI WILAYAH FUJIAN, CHINA**

ABSTRAK

Memandangkan pergeseran guru prasekolah luar bandar yang teruk di China, terdapat kebimbangan yang semakin meningkat mengenai kepuasan pilihan kerjaya guru prasekolah pra-perkhidmatan di universiti-universiti tempatan China di bawah dasar pendidikan guru yang dibiayai oleh kerajaan (selepas ini disebut sebagai PPTGFTEPLUC). Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat kesan motivasi pengajaran, persepsi tentang pengajaran, dan identiti profesional mengenai kepuasan pilihan kerjaya pptgftepluc. Kajian ini memajukan model faktor yang mempengaruhi pilihan pengajaran (skala pilihan-pilihan) dan secara empirikal mengkaji kesan setiap dimensi motivasi pengajaran dan persepsi tentang pengajaran mengenai kepuasan pilihan kerjaya, dan kesan pengantaraan identiti profesional. Untuk mengesahkan rangka kerja yang dicadangkan, kaedah campuran digunakan dalam kajian ini, tafsiran data kuantitatif disokong oleh data kualitatif. Menggunakan teknik pensampelan berstrata, data yang dikumpulkan dari sampel 508 guru prasekolah pra-perkhidmatan melalui kaedah tinjauan web, dianalisis menggunakan SPSS 22 dan SmartPLS 3.3.9. Tiga instrumen yang digunakan adalah faktor yang mempengaruhi skala pilihan pengajaran, skala identiti profesional guru pelajar dan skala minat guru. Analisis deskriptif dan analisis kesimpulan digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa kebolehan pengajaran yang dirasakan (PTA) ($p = 0.017 < 0.05$), nilai utiliti peribadi (PUV) ($p = 0.001 < 0.05$), kepentingan guru (Ti) ($p = 0.041 < 0.05$), permintaan tugas (TD) ($p = 0.026 < 0.05$) dan identiti profesional (PI) ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$), dengan ketara mempunyai pengaruh positif terhadap kepuasan pilihan kerjaya (CCS), manakala kerjaya kejatuhan (FC) dengan ketara, mempunyai kesan negatif terhadap kepuasan pilihan kerjaya (CCS) ($p = 0.042 < 0.05$). Di samping itu, hasilnya menunjukkan bahawa identiti profesional (PI) ($p = 0.048 < 0.05$) adalah mediator lengkap mengenai hubungan antara pengaruh sosialisasi (SNI) dan kepuasan pilihan kerjaya (CCS). Identiti Profesional (PI) ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) adalah pengantara separa mengenai hubungan antara kepuasan guru (TI) dan kepuasan pilihan kerjaya (CCS) dan juga pengantara separa mengenai hubungan antara pulangan tugas (TR) dan pilihan kerjaya Kepuasan (CCS) ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Oleh itu, implikasi kajian ini memberikan bukti empirikal untuk kesan kolektif pengajaran motivasi, persepsi tentang pengajaran dan identiti profesional, dan kesan bebas dari setiap dimensi TM, Pt. Membina penemuan kajian ini, penyelidikan masa depan dapat menyelidiki faktor-faktor tambahan yang mungkin mempengaruhi kepuasan pilihan kerjaya di kalangan pptgftepluc. Selain itu, kajian membujur boleh dijalankan untuk menyiasat bagaimana pembolehubah ini berevolusi dan berinteraksi dari masa ke masa, memberikan pandangan yang berharga mengenai sifat dinamik kepuasan pilihan kerjaya dalam konteks guru prasekolah pra-perkhidmatan.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
BCa LL	Biased-Corrected and Accelerated Bootstrap Lower Level
BCa UL	Biased-Corrected and Accelerated Bootstrap Upper Level
CB-SEM	Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modelling
CCS	Career choice satisfaction
CMV	Common Method Variance
CR	Composite Reliability
EVT	Expectancy-value theory
FIT-Choice	Factors influencing teaching choice
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlation
KMO	Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
PI	Professional identity
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling
PPTGFTEPLUC	Pre-Service Preschool Teachers Under the Government-Funded Teacher Education Policy
PT	Perceptions about teaching
SEM	Structural equation model
SPSS	Statistical Packages for the Social Science
TM	Teaching Motivation
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



This study attempts to understand pre-service preschool teachers' teaching motivations (TM), perceptions about teaching (PT), and professional identity (PI) on career choice satisfaction (CCS) in the context of the Government-funded Teacher Education Policy in the local universities of China, and to explore whether professional identity mediates the relationship between teaching motivation, perceptions about teaching, and career choice satisfaction. Specifically, A mixed research method was chosen by using the FIT-Choice scale, the Student Teacher Professional Identity Scale, the Teacher Interest Scale, and the semi-structured interview outline to determine the effects of TM, PT, and PI on career choice satisfaction, also exploring the mediating effect of PI between TM, PT, and CCS, clearly understanding the effects on career choice satisfaction can help Chinese



education authorities develop policies to recruit highly qualified teachers and overcome the attrition problem of preschool teachers in rural areas.

This chapter provides a brief description of the research, which includes the background of the study, the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, research hypothesis, conceptual & theoretical framework, operational definition of the research, the contribution and limitation of the research, the research structure of the study and conclusion of this chapter.

1.2 Background of Study

The global economy, technology, and education progress have urged people to produce new concepts, ideas, and values, leading to various new occupations based on the original occupations. In the face of numerous career choices, students with good academic backgrounds tend to consider occupations other than teaching (Han, Borgonovi & Guerriero, 2017). More importantly, the situation worsens when students' higher professional requirements and expectations complicate the problem. As more occupations are available in the labor market, teachers and pre-service teachers have more and better career choices (Shi, Chen & Chen, 2019). Governments worldwide view education systems as engines of future creativity, ingenuity, and economic development. The International Student Assessment Program (PISA) and the International Teaching and Learning Survey (TALIS) emphasize that the quality of teachers not only has a significant effect on students' learning outcomes but also a



critical and often challenging role in shaping the future of society (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2018).

The education industry has a relatively severe problem of teacher turnover due to objective external factors and teachers' subjective factors, among others, leading to an increasing rate of teacher turnover (Nguyen et al., 2020). The central issue of teacher attrition is convincingly presented as an international, complex, and multi-layered problem that has swept through several countries worldwide (Kelchtermans, 2017). Many OECD members, including the US, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Turkey, and the Netherlands, have also had trouble recruiting and keeping talented teachers (Hennessy & Lynch, 2017). Similar to the situation in many countries, China is faced with the challenge of attracting and retaining teachers. In the Chinese context, teacher attrition is of equal concern, with rural teacher attrition being particularly severe. Data from the Chinese Ministry of Education show that the number of rural teachers nationwide was 4,729,508, 3,304,508, 3,300,000, and 2,900,000 in 2010, 2013, 2015, and 2018, respectively, with a total loss of approximately 1,829,508 rural teachers from 2010 to 2018, implying that the number of rural teachers in China is still decreasing (Ministry of Education, China, 2019).

Overall, we can see that the global loss of teachers has become an issue of urgent concern. Therefore, to attract and retain teachers and make teaching an attractive career choice, many countries have focused on improving teacher recruitment and preparation plan, providing high-quality initial teacher education and training to retain qualified teachers, improve education outcomes, and ensure education quality. The recruitment of competent pre-service teachers and the retention of teachers in this





profession is the top priority for all Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2022).

At all stages of education, teachers at almost all levels are at risk of attrition; the same is true for early childhood education teachers. The foundation for lifelong learning, a crucial component of the national education system, and a vital social welfare concern is early childhood education. (Central Committee of the Communist Party of China & State Council of China, 2018). A sufficient number, high quality, reasonable structure, and a relatively stable team of preschool teachers must be established to develop early childhood education (Central Committee of the Communist Party of China & State Council of China, 2018). This is the premise and foundation for the development of early childhood education.

Preschool teachers play a crucial role in the development and education of young children due to the nature of their work, which involves interacting with children, providing care and education, and shaping their growth. Their responsibilities encompass caregiving, teaching, and guiding children in their learning journey (Ding, 2018). However, the attrition rate in this profession has become a noticeable and pressing issue in recent years (Smith, 2021; Johnson, 2019; Lee, 2020; Brown, 2018; Chen, 2017).

China also faces the problem of losing preschool teachers (Zhang & Nan, 2020). In recent years, with the implementation of China's Two-Child Policy in 2016 (State Council of China & The Communist Party of China (CPC), 2015), China's demand



for total resources for early childhood education has increased dramatically, which has had an essential effect on the scale, model, and quality of early childhood education in China. In the face of excessive workload and colossal work pressure, many preschool teachers resign, resulting in a more severe attrition of teachers. Based on this, China issued "Several Opinions on deepening the Reform and Standardization of early childhood education" (Central Committee of the Communist Party of China & The State Council, 2018) (Hereinafter referred to as "Several Opinions), which puts forward precise requirements and strict standards to strengthen the construction of preschool teachers' team. In recent years, China has vigorously developed and attached importance to early childhood education to meet the growing demand for preschool education. This requires the construction of a batch of qualified kindergartens and a team of preschool teachers with high morality, high quality, and excellent professional skills.

In China, colleges and universities, as the primary training base for preschool teachers, following the requirements of the Ministry of Education, under the dual constraints of social demand and "professional standards," colleges and universities in different provinces and cities have gradually carried out the reform of early childhood education curriculum to realize the organic combination of talent training and "professional standards."

Since promulgating Professional Standards, early childhood education majors in colleges and universities have actively reformed their curriculum. However, some problems are still very prominent. The disconnection between theoretical and practical courses, the overlap and intersection of professional courses, and the



curriculum setting emphasizing theory over skills in early childhood education may significantly impact the teaching motivation of pre-service preschool teachers. If the curriculum does not adequately address their practical needs and interests, it could lead to a lack of enthusiasm and commitment to pursuing a career in early childhood education (Li & Tang, 2019).

Similarly, perceptions about teaching are shaped by the educational experiences and practical training provided to pre-service preschool teachers. With the reduction of practical courses and the delegation of practical training to kindergartens, some pre-service teachers may lack the necessary hands-on experience and exposure to natural teaching environments. As a result, their perceptions about teaching may become skewed or incomplete, leading to a less accurate understanding of the challenges and rewards associated with a career in early childhood education (Ni, 2018).

Furthermore, the professional identity of pre-service preschool teachers is closely related to how they perceive themselves as early childhood educators and the value they attach to their profession. The issues highlighted in the background, such as the loss of professional identity and interest in early childhood education, may be exacerbated by the lack of practical experience and inadequate training opportunities. If pre-service teachers do not have the chance to engage with the practical aspects of teaching fully, it can hinder the development of a solid and positive professional identity (Lai & Zhang, 2020).



More importantly, in recent years, the "postgraduate entrance examination fever" has prompted colleges and universities to continuously reduce practical courses and delegate the task of training students' practical ability to kindergartens, allowing pre-service preschool teachers (seniors) with no practical experience to enter the kindergarten work directly, then increasing the attrition rate of preschool teachers (Ni, 2018). In addition, when the rare practice courses take the form of collective teaching, pre-service preschool teachers pay attention to skills imitating, which cannot stimulate students' interest in practical education and ignore the actual value of practice courses.

Therefore, the issues mentioned above ultimately lead to a loss of professional identity and interest in early childhood education, resulting in preschool pre-service teachers' intention to leave the field of early childhood education after graduation or leave the field after employment, which has seriously caused the shortage of preschool teachers (Lai & Zhang, 2020). It is reported that from 2013 to 2018, the number of preschool teachers in China has lost as much as 830,000, and the attrition rate has been increasing. By 2018, the country's total number of preschool teachers was only 2.43 million (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2019). The attrition problem of preschool teachers is getting severe year by year, and the quality of preschool education is also challenging to maintain.

More importantly, due to the joint influence of many factors, such as low treatment, lack of social security and so on, the supplement of rural preschool teachers in China is still tricky (Shen & Luen, 2022). In rural areas and other economically underdeveloped areas of China, there are few public kindergartens, and the salaries of preschool teachers working in these kindergartens are not guaranteed, coupled with



poor working conditions, high work intensity, and incomplete title promotion system, so career attractiveness is seriously reduced. The replenishment of preschool teachers in rural areas is very difficult, the attrition is severe, and the team is volatile (Yuan, 2018). According to statistics, the attrition rate of the rural preschool teacher from 2015-2019 in Jiuyuan City, Inner Mongolia of China is 39%, 41%, 43%, 45%, and 47%, respectively, which is increasing year by year (Xiao & Chen, 2020). Rural preschool teachers have a high turnover rate and an extreme willingness to leave (Huang, 2018; Huang & Liao, 2019; Wang et al., 2022).

Overall, all data show that the attrition of preschool teachers globally and in China is severe, which indicates that the education and decision-making departments don't have succeeded in transforming pre-service preschool teachers into in-service preschool teachers, failing to effectively keep them in the position of in-service preschool teachers (Bao, 2017).

Facing such a difficult situation, researchers found that as teachers' career satisfaction declined in the years before they left, teacher retention rates also declined, which suggests that the decline in career satisfaction is an essential factor that pushes them to leave their job (Lee & Quek, 2017; Li et al., 2020). Similarly, in the study of preschool teachers' career satisfaction, it is also found that there is a close relationship between preschool teachers' career satisfaction and attrition rate (Jones et al., 2017; Kume, 2022). In China, there are a large number of similar research results, which present a high negative correlation between preschool teachers' career satisfaction and attrition rate (Bao, 2017; Zhu & Sheng, 2018; Suo et al., 2022).



Accordingly, to decrease the attrition rate of preschool teachers in China, government departments and policymakers in the education industry should pay more attention to preschool teachers' career satisfaction. Further, in the face of severe attrition of preschool teachers, teachers' quality, training, professional learning, and the formulation of professional standards should be brought to attention (Watt et al., 2017).

Therefore, it is necessary to clarify the degree of pre-service preschool teachers' career satisfaction and its influencing factors. Understanding the factors influencing the pre-service preschool teacher's career satisfaction can provide a vital experience basis for attracting pre-service preschool teachers, formulating early childhood education policies and plans, and retaining effective preschool teachers, improving the overall teaching quality (Gong & Wang, 2017). Many researchers have tried to explore what attracted individuals to join the teacher education program in China (Guo & Sun, 2018; Wang et al., 2019; Ren & Yan, 2019). Therefore, empirical research on this topic is necessary to provide urgent insight, understand the motivational factors of preschool teachers' choice of a teaching career, effectively improve the career satisfaction of preschool teachers, and alleviate the severe attrition of preschool teachers in China.

1.3 Problem Statement

Recognizing the importance of preschool teachers' career satisfaction is the cornerstone of alleviating the attrition of preschool teachers, so many studies have



explored the factors that may help improve preschool teachers' career satisfaction. Faced with the problems of severe attrition of preschool teachers and the deterioration of education quality in China, some previous studies directly attribute the reasons for attrition to preschool teachers' low social status (Shang & Shen, 2017), poor salaries (Liu & Zeng, 2021), high work pressure (Liao & Huang, 2019), and few development opportunities (Ren & Yan, 2019); then they advocate that by increasing the investment in education (Song, 2019), improving the welfare and social status of preschool teachers (Zheng, 2018), improving the training and management of preschool teachers (Huang, 2018), and finally improving the construction of preschool teachers. Only this way can ensure the quality and stability of the preschool teachers (Ye et al., 2020).



conditions for enhancing the quality and stability of preschool teachers. However, the existing research on the suggestions for improving the external factors of the attrition of preschool teachers doesn't have changed the status of the attrition of preschool teachers from the root cause (Shang et al., 2020; Hong et al., 2021).

Existing studies have investigated and made recommendations on various aspects of the career satisfaction of preschool teachers. Still, the pre-service preschool teachers' stage has been less considered. These studies ignore the factors that may influence the early stages of a preschool teacher's career choice. From the beginning of the career (teacher education program) to understand preschool teachers' career choice satisfaction, which is the practical solution to alleviate the problem of preschool teacher attrition (Hennessy & Lynch, 2017; Hong et al., 2021).





However, it is unclear whether the initial form of teachers' career satisfaction, namely, career choice satisfaction, can play a significant role in teaching. Therefore, after realizing the importance of the career choice satisfaction of pre-service teachers, many studies have shown that pre-service teachers choose teachers as a career with multiple motivational factors, including intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic factors (Watt & Richardson, 2007; Watt & Richardson, 2008).

More importantly, the existing research on the factors that influence the career choices of pre-service teachers has ignored the process of their career choice satisfaction and career selection based on the interaction of intrinsic and extrinsic conditions, and it is also a comprehensive process of value judgment after consideration. Meanwhile, different career selection processes and methods are also important reasons for teachers' severe attrition, uneven quality, and declining education quality. For example, teacher-related factors, including teaching experience, teaching self-efficacy, and educational background, are influential factors that can improve teachers' career satisfaction and reduce teacher attrition rates (Shi et al., 2019).

However, existing research seems to miss some crucial points that may help to provide an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the factors that affect the satisfaction of pre-service teachers' career choices. People gradually find that focusing on teachers' "experience and efficacy" is no longer enough to improve teachers' career satisfaction. Several simultaneous factors rather than one factor will have a more significant effect on pre-service teacher career choices (Guo & Sun, 2018; Goller et al., 2019; Akpochafo, 2020).



Over time, too many studies have adopted different scales to explore the factors influencing teachers' teaching choices. However, the lack of scale verification reports and the excessive reliance on the original display of digital frequencies have led to the following researchers' inability to directly or comprehensively compare a large number of research results (Wang, 2020; Nesje et al., 2018); different operational definitions have resulted in a lack of precision and classification overlapping (Chesnut, 2017). It seems that there is an urgent need to apply basic theoretical and psychometric work to establish an effective and reliable multidimensional framework within which to investigate the teaching motivation of teachers in the comparison cohort and track the entry of these teachers into the education field to predict critical outcomes, such as self-efficacy, happiness, and career choice satisfaction.

Therefore, since 2002, to solve the problem of "nearly 30% of Australian teachers leave within five years of teaching", Australian scholars Watt and Richardson (2006) created the Factors Influencing the Teaching Choice model (hereinafter referred to FIT-Choice model) based on the Expectancy-Value theory of Eccles and Wigfield (1983). They argue that pre-service teachers are an essential component of the future teaching force and that in the face of declining education quality and teacher attrition, it is necessary not only to use general statistical information to understand how many and which teacher education students are not choosing or leaving; It is also essential to understand the psychological processes behind this phenomenon, and the psychological processes that lead pre-service teachers to choose, stay in or leave the teaching profession (Watt & Richardson, 2006).

Therefore, to address the previously mentioned issues, they collaborated to conduct a study on FIT-Choice, which attempts to analyze the reasons for pre-service teachers' teaching motivation, perceptions about teaching, and their career choice satisfaction. The creation of the FIT-Choice model provided the basis for the lack of an accepted theoretical and analytical framework. With the release of the FIT-Choice scale (Richardson & Watt 2007), many researchers and scholars have conducted many studies on pre-service teachers' career choices. Currently, 17 countries, including the United States, Finland, India, Turkey, Korea, and Malaysia, have extensively researched teachers' career choices using the FIT-Choice (Factors Influencing Teaching Choices) scale. In the past decade, the research on "Factor Influencing Teaching Factors" (FIT-Choice) has become the most influential research project on teachers' attrition and the deterioration of education quality. This widespread adoption shows that teacher motivation and career choice satisfaction are worrying issues in many countries (Akpochofo, 2020).

The FIT-Choice framework is a coherent model that can guide the systematic investigation of why people choose a teaching career and their career choice satisfaction. It expands the range of factors that influence teachers' career choices, changes the researchers' focus on the shortcomings of value factors, breaks the limitations of neglecting pre-service teacher career choice research, clarifies the definition of factors that influence pre-service teacher career choices, and avoids research stack caused by confusing definitions (Guo & Sun, 2018).

Existing research has studied the factors that influence the teaching choices of teachers and pre-service teachers (Suryani et al., 2016; Nesje et al., 2017; Goller et al.,

2019). Among the findings of these studies, pre-service teachers' motivation and perceptions about teaching are considered to be the critical factors in improving their career choice satisfaction (Eren, 2017; Salifu et al., 2017; Goller et al., 2019). These studies indicate that pre-service teachers' motivational factors for choosing teaching as a career are mainly intrinsic (interest, self-efficacy, social experience, and learning experience) and may also be extrinsic factors (job stability, social status, salary, etc.). Although the FIT-Choice model helps determine the key factors influencing individuals' choice of teaching and has already identified some factors that motivate pre-service teachers to teach, the use of this model to describe the effectiveness of pre-service teachers' teaching motivation, perceptions about teaching, and career choice satisfaction is acceptable but has been criticized for not allowing the detection of other factors that may influence teachers' teaching choice (Young, 2018; Ranyard et al., 2020).

Others argue that the FIT-Choice model ignores key motivational structures that are essential components of motivation for pre-service teachers, such as "love of the subject," "transfer of knowledge and skills," and "desire to improve the quality of teaching" (Carrasco, 2019; Lee et al., 2019). Despite these criticisms, it is undisputed that the FIT-Choice model has provided a wealth of theoretical and methodological advances in teacher motivation research, yielding important insights into the relative effect of factors that influence teaching choices.

Subsequently, different scholars used the FIT-Choice model framework to investigate pre-service teachers further and found "Professional Plans" (Watt & Richardson, 2008), "Hope" (Eren, 2014), "Future Time Perspective" ((McLean et al.,

2019), “career Expectation” (Wang & Houston, 2021) and “Professional Identity” (Eren & Rakıcıoğlu-Söylemez, 2017; Simić et al., 2021; Liu & Boyd, 2018) factors are closely related to their motivation of teaching and career choice satisfaction.

Realizing one’s motivation and other factors for teaching, the pre-service teacher may have higher satisfaction in career choices and be more willing to choose the preschool teacher career after graduation. However, most research on the influencing factors of teachers' career choices is conducted on in-service teachers. The pre-service teacher education program stage is an essential period for pre-service teachers to construct their ideals of teaching. The motivation to teach at this stage affects their professional learning and level of commitment to educational practice. It also determines their future career choice, enthusiasm for the profession, and autonomy for professional development after entry into teaching. As a pre-service education stage for preschool teachers, examining the satisfaction of pre-service teachers’ career choices will have more special significance (Liu & Boyd, 2018).

In China, pre-service teachers are generally trained by national and provincial universities. In 2007, China implemented a Government-funded Teacher Education Policy at six ministerial teacher training universities: Beijing Normal University, East China Normal University, Northeast Normal University, Central China Normal University, Shaanxi Normal University, and Southwest University. Unlike graduates of Government-funded Teacher Education Policy at universities directly under the Chinese Ministry of Education (a group of universities now managed by the Chinese Ministry of Education) who will have more opportunities to teach in urban areas, pre-service teachers at local government-funded policy universities will be more likely to



lead in rural areas. As we mentioned earlier, the attrition rate of preschool teachers in rural areas is exceptionally high. Preschool teachers under the Government-funded Teacher Education Policy at local colleges and universities have become a vital support force to address this challenge (Wang, 2020).

Therefore, as the candidate teachers of preschool teachers in rural areas in the future, if the pre-service preschool teachers under the Government-funded Teacher Education Policy in the local universities of China (Hereinafter refer to PPTGFTEPLUC) can figure out whether they have a solid motivation to teach in rural areas and to have more clear perceptions about career, they can judge whether he is suitable for the teaching field with a scientific perspective, which will have a far-reaching and significant significance for the career planning of PPTGFTEPLUC.

However, there are few studies conducted with PPTGFTEPLUC as the research object. In the Chinese context, As of December 2021, just 63 articles and dissertations employed the FIT-Choice model to explore the teacher's teaching motivation, perceptions about teaching, and career choice satisfaction. Among them were just six articles on early childhood teachers, one on rural preschool teachers (Wang, 2020), only one on pre-service preschool teachers (Guo & Sun, 2018), and no articles to date that investigated PPTGFTEPLUC. Hence, to address the gap, this study will adopt PPTGFTEPLUC as the research participants to examine whether their teaching motivation and perceptions about teaching will significantly affect their career choice satisfaction, promoting rural early childhood education development.

Also, studies have shown that pre-service teachers' interest in teaching is closely related to their career choice satisfaction and planning (Guo & Sun, 2018). Despite





the importance of teaching interest, pre-service teachers' interest in teaching is not promising. Surveys and studies in China have found that pre-service teachers' low interest in the subject affects pre-service teachers' career choice satisfaction (Guo & Sun, 2018). Chinese scholars also showed that teacher interest significantly affects their career development. Based on empirical analysis of Chinese teacher educator data, 33% believed that a career in early childhood teaching did not fit their interests, which was an important reason why graduates' actual jobs did not match their career expectations (Li, 2021).

More importantly, in the literature that influences teachers' career choices, there is little evidence to show the combined effect of teachers' interest in teaching and career choice satisfaction within a framework. Even in 2017, Richardson & Watt added a "subject interest" motivation in the FIT-Choice model, thinking that this seems to be particularly important for future middle school teachers and that personal interest in specific subject areas can be considered important in determining career choices factors (Glutsch & König, 2019). Nevertheless, few studies still include subject interest and test teachers' teaching motivation within the FIT-Choice model.

In addition, other researchers have recognized that subject interest is only one of the three dimensions of teacher interest. Teachers' interest in teaching can be divided into three dimensions: subject interest, didactic interest, and educational interest (Eren, 2012; Schiefele & Schaffner, 2015; Schiefele, 2017). More importantly, the researchers found that pre-service teachers' interest in teaching was significantly related to their career choice satisfaction and professional plans (Eren, 2012). Therefore, to a certain extent, the dimension of teachers' interest in teaching can be



added to the teachers' teaching motivation dimension in the FIT-Choice model to provide an in-depth explanation of the effect of career choice satisfaction. However, there are few studies to verify further that the three-dimension of teacher interest influences pre-service teachers' career satisfaction. Therefore, to fully explain the influence of teaching motivation on career choice satisfaction, the role of each dimension of teacher interest cannot be ignored. Until now, no study has incorporated teacher interest into the FIT-Choice model to investigate Chinese pre-service preschool teachers' career choice satisfaction. To address this gap, adding the three dimensions of teacher interest into the model is of great importance to the pre-service preschool teachers' career choice.

In addition, Perceptions about teaching, including task demand and task return, are a crucial aspect to investigate in understanding the career choice satisfaction among teachers (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). These perceptions influence teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and motivations toward their future teaching careers and can have significant implications for their overall career satisfaction and retention in the field of education (Yin & Lee, 2020). Research has shown that high task demand perceptions can increase job stress and burnout and reduce teacher job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Yin & Lee, 2020). Understanding pre-service preschool teachers' perceptions of the demanding aspects of the teaching profession can shed light on potential barriers they may face in their career paths, which could affect their overall career choice satisfaction.

On the other hand, task return refers to pre-service preschool teachers' perceptions of the rewards, benefits, and satisfaction they anticipate from their



teaching careers (Kyriacou, 2011). Positive task return perceptions, such as feelings of accomplishment from making a positive impact on children's learning and development, job autonomy, and supportive work environments, have been associated with higher career satisfaction and increased teacher retention (Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Exploring pre-service teachers' perceptions of the positive aspects of the profession can provide insights into the factors that motivate and drive their career satisfaction.

Understanding pre-service preschool teachers' perceptions about teaching, particularly task demand and task return, is essential for several reasons. Firstly, it can inform teacher education programs and policy initiatives to address potential challenges and enhance the overall preparedness of pre-service teachers for their future careers (Yin & Lee, 2020). By recognizing and addressing perceptions related to task demand, teacher education programs can provide targeted support and resources to help pre-service teachers cope with potential stressors and challenges in their professional journey.

Examining task return perceptions can create a positive and supportive teaching environment for pre-service preschool teachers. Providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to experience positive aspects of teaching, such as supportive mentoring and rewarding experiences with children, can enhance their professional identity and job satisfaction (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). This, in turn, can have positive implications for their long-term commitment to the profession and overall career choice satisfaction.



Lastly, investigating perceptions about teaching, motivation, and professional identity can comprehensively understand the factors influencing career choice satisfaction among pre-service preschool teachers in Fujian Province. By considering all three variables together, educational policymakers and institutions can design effective strategies to attract and retain high-quality pre-service teachers in the early childhood education field.

Furthermore, in the research on influencing teachers' career choices, there is limited evidence on mediating variables in teaching motivation, perceptions about teaching, and career choice satisfaction. However, the mediating variable can provide more insight into the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable, and it can explain how and why the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable happens (Hayes, 2009; Hayes & Preacher, 2013; Igartua & Hayes, 2021). In previous research on teachers' teaching motivation, researchers have confirmed that there is a close relationship between teachers' professional identity and teaching motivation, and career choice satisfaction (Eren & Rakıcioğlu, 2017; George et al., 2018; Liu & Boyd, 2018), believing that a strong sense of professional identity can support teachers' understanding of teaching, their career and teaching practice.

Eren and Rakıcioğlu (2017) suggest that more attention should be paid to the development of professional identity for pre-service preschool teachers in teacher education programs because teachers' professional identity is an essential component of career choice (Eren & Rakıcioğlu, 2017). However, few pieces of research still use mediating variables in the model of factors influencing teacher career choice (FIT-Choice). Especially in the existing study, the relationship between teaching

motivation, perceptions about teaching, and career choice satisfaction hasn't been investigated by using professional identity as a mediator, the same situation in China. To date, no study has used professional identity in the FIT-Choice model to explore its mediating role in explaining the path of action between teaching motivation, perceptions about teaching, and career choice satisfaction. Therefore, the mediating effect test of professional identity can further clarify the role of teaching motivation and perceptions about teaching on career choice satisfaction and provide empirical evidence.

Therefore, considering the existing literature's limitations, we must thoroughly investigate the potential factors of PPTGFTEPLUC's career choice satisfaction. Although eight variables in the original FIT-Choice model can be used as predictors of career choice satisfaction (intrinsic career value, perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialisation influences, task demand, task return), in this study, two more variables (teacher interest, and professional identity) will be added as predictors that influence career choice satisfaction while deleting one variable (intrinsic career value). The reason for deleting this variable is because the three items in this dimension, "I am interested in teaching" and "I like teaching," are also presented in the three dimensions of teacher interest, which illustrate more precisely and in detail (already got the permission of the author). So these two newly added variables will play an active role and provide more insight into predicting career choice satisfaction. Therefore, these factors need to be put into a comprehensive framework to study the career choice of PPTGFTEPLUC.

In summary, because of the importance of career choice satisfaction and the necessity of providing empirical evidence of PPTGFTEPLUC's career choice satisfaction reasons, this study proposes career choice satisfaction as an outcome variable of teaching motivation, perceptions about teaching, and professional identity. Professional identity was used as a mediating variable to fully illustrate the effect of professional identity on teaching motivation, perceptions about education, and career choice satisfaction. Therefore, based on the existing literature, to provide a more in-depth explanation of career choice satisfaction, the standard FIT-Choice model (Watt & Richardson, 2007) was revised and expanded. This study investigates the effect of teaching motivation, perceptions about teaching, and professional identity on career choice satisfaction through the extension of the model.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main goal of this study is to explore the influencing factors of PPTGFTEPLUC's career choice satisfaction. To achieve this ultimate goal, this study examines the predictive effects of teaching motivation (including factors: Perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialisation influences, and teacher interest), perceptions about teaching (including factors: task demand and task return) and professional identity on career choice satisfaction. Based on examining direct effects, the mediating effect of professional identity on the relationships between teaching motivation, perceptions about teaching, and career choice satisfaction are analyzed. Specifically, this study attempts to

i) examine the effects of teaching motivation (perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialisation influences and teacher interest), perceptions about teaching (task demand and task return) on career choice satisfaction (CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC;

ii) assess the effect of professional identity (PI) on career choice satisfaction (CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC;

iii) evaluate the effects of teaching motivation (perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialisation influences and teacher interest), perceptions about teaching (task demand and task return) on professional identity (PI) of PPTGFTEPLUC;

iv) explore the mediating effect of professional identity on the relationships between teaching motivation (perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialisation influences, and teacher interest), perceptions about teaching (task demand and task return) and career choice satisfaction (CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

1.5 Research Questions

Thus, the questions to be addressed in this study were raised about examining the influencing factors of the career choice satisfaction of PPTGFTEPLUC. Accordingly, this research deals with one central question, which is

RQ: How do teaching motivation (perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialisation influences and teacher interest), perceptions about teaching(task demand and task return) and professional identity influence career choice satisfaction of PPTGFTEPLUC?

Further, to address the gaps, the main research question is subdivided into the following questions:

i. What are the effects of teaching motivation(perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialisation influences, and teacher interest), perceptions about teaching(task demand and task return) on career choice satisfaction(CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC?

ii. What is the effect of professional identity (PI) on the career choice satisfaction (CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC?

iii. To what extent does teaching motivation (perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialisation influences and teacher interest), perceptions about teaching(task demand and task return) affect professional identity (PI) of PPTGFTEPLUC?

iv. Does professional identity (PI) mediate the effects on the relationships between teaching motivation(perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialisation influences and teacher interest),

perceptions about teaching(task demand and task return) and career choice satisfaction(CCS)of PPTGFTEPLUC?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses are proposed based on the research objectives and questions described above.

Specific Objective 1 led to the following hypotheses:

H1: Perceived teaching abilities predict career choice satisfaction(CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

H2: Fallback career predicts career choice satisfaction(CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

H3: Personal utility value predicts career choice satisfaction(CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

H4: Social utility value predicts career choice satisfaction(CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

H5: Socialisation influences predict career choice satisfaction(CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

H6: Teacher interest predicts career choice satisfaction(CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

H7: Task demand predicts career choice satisfaction(CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

H8: Task return predicts career choice satisfaction(CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

Specific Objective 2 led to the following hypotheses:

H9: Professional identity (PI) predicts career choice satisfaction (CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

Specific Objective 3 led to the following hypotheses:

H10: Perceived teaching abilities predict the professional identity (PI) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

H11: Fallback career predicts professional identity (PI) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

H12: Personal utility value predicts the professional identity (PI) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

H13: Social utility value predicts the professional identity (PI) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

H14: Socialisation influences predict the professional identity (PI) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

H15: Teacher interest predicts the professional identity (PI) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

H16: Task demand predicts the professional identity (PI) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

H17: Task return predicts professional identity (PI) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

Specific Objective 4 led to the following hypotheses:

H18: Professional identity (PI) mediates the positive relationship between Perceived teaching abilities and career choice satisfaction(CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

H19: Professional identity (PI) mediates the negative relationship between fallback career and career choice satisfaction(CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

H20: Professional identity (PI) mediates the positive relationship between personal utility value and career choice satisfaction(CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

- H21:** Professional identity (PI) mediates the positive relationship between social utility value and career choice satisfaction(CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC.
- H22:** Professional identity (PI) mediates the positive relationship between socialisation influences and career choice satisfaction(CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC.
- H23:** Professional identity (PI) mediates the positive relationship between teacher interest and career choice satisfaction(CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC.
- H24:** Professional identity (PI) mediates the negative relationship between task demand and career choice satisfaction(CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC.
- H25:** Professional identity (PI) mediates the positive relationship between task return and career choice satisfaction(CCS) of PPTGFTEPLUC.

The framework diagram of the research hypothesis is shown in the following

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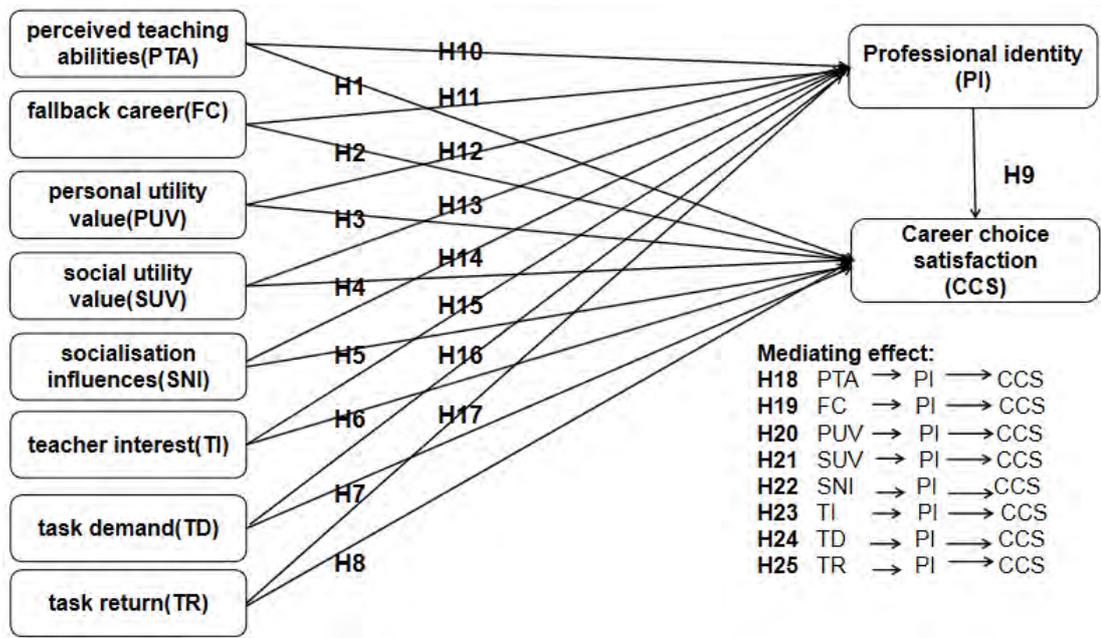


Figure 1.1. Research Hypotheses

1.7 Conceptual & Theoretical Framework

When conducting research, the concepts or factors must be conceptualized to highlight their construct and the relationships between them. To facilitate conceptualization, diagrams can describe relevant concepts and their predictive relationships, which were synthesized from the literature review process (Hughes, 2019). More importantly, researchers can use such relevant conceptual frameworks to make more intuitive representations of the complexity of particular issues or how they represent phenomena. These frameworks will emphasize appropriate variables and outcomes and their interconnections.

In this study, 11 dimensions have been conceptualized as factors that study the career choice satisfaction of PPTGFTEPLUC. Taking these factors as relevant variables, it can be divided into nine independent variables and one dependent variable. The dependent variable is the pre-service preschool teacher's career choice satisfaction; the independent variables are perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialisation influences, teacher interest, task demand, task return and professional identity.

In the context of the current research, teaching motivation represents the driving force needed to pursue a career as a teacher. Based on the Expectancy-value theory and Self-efficacy theory, this study assesses PPTGFTEPLUC's motivation to engage in a teaching career, focusing on the effect of teachers' motivation, perceptions, and professional identity on career choice satisfaction to engage in the early childhood education field.

Expectancy-value theory and Self-efficacy theory are the theoretical basis for this research. On the one hand, the Expectancy value theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) argues that the expectation of success and the value of the task are essential factors in pre-service teachers' career choices, behavior, commitment, performance, persistence, and social experience also plays a vital role in the task selection process. The expectation of success is classified explicitly as self-efficacy, perceptions about teaching, and dividing task values into intrinsic career value, practical value, achievement value and cost. Watt and Richardson (2007) created the FIT-Choice model of influencing factors of career choice based on the research of Eccles and Wigfield to elucidate the practicality of the Expectancy-value theory. They proposed a three-factor structure consisting of task value perception (motivational dimension: socialisation influences, intrinsic value, person utility value, social utility value, and fallback career); ability perception (perceived teaching abilities); and task high demand perception (task demand and task return). Expressly, these factors represent the basic features of expectancy theory.

On the other hand, Albert Bandura proposed the self-efficacy theory in 1982 from a social learning perspective to explain the causes of motivation in particular situations (Bandura, 1982). Self-efficacy is an individual's subjective assessment of their ability to perform one specific work area. Self-efficacy affects people's choice of behavior and behavioral persistence, people's level of effort and attitude toward difficulties, people's way of thinking and behavioral efficiency, and people's way of attribution.

Furthermore, according to the interest theory (Schiefele, 1991; Hidi & Renninger, 2006, Hidi et al., 2014), the research has found that teachers' interests can be conceptualized as individual dispositions that vary among teachers (Watt et al., 2012). Within this framework, teacher interest represents the motivational characteristics of teachers and is defined as "the degree of enjoyment, excitement, and pleasure that teachers typically experience in their professional activities" (Høgheim & Federici, 2020). Teacher interests can therefore refer to a relatively permanent attraction to specific topics or areas (e.g., school subjects, specific areas of knowledge). These attractions are intrinsic value beliefs, representing cognitive representations of the relationship between a domain (e.g., early childhood education) and sensory and value-related attributes (e.g., excitement, relevance to oneself). Thus, teacher interest involves positive feelings and perceptions of personal importance for a particular subject area (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992).

Based on the above theory and the needs of this study, the intrinsic value dimension in the original framework was replaced with the teacher interest dimension, and professional identity was added as a mediating variable. Figure 1.2 describes this study's conceptual and theoretical framework, highlighting the relevant concepts and theories in this study and their presumed relationships.

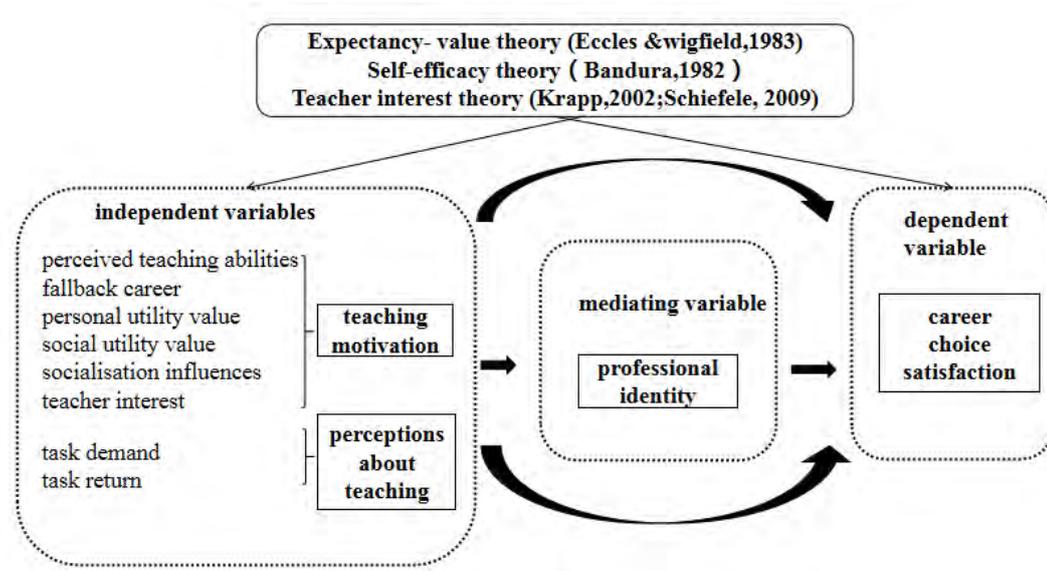


Figure 1.2. The Conceptual and Theoretical Framework of the Study

1.8 Operational Definition

The following are the operational definitions of constructs investigated in this research:

i. Government-funded Teacher Education Policy in the local universities: This refers to a policy in which each province and municipality is responsible for arranging tuition, housing, and living allowances for pre-service teacher education teachers while they are in local universities, but pre-service teachers generally need to return to their region of origin to work in the education field for at least six years after graduating from university in four years (CPC Central Committee & The State Council of China, 2018).

ii. Pre-service teacher: also a student teacher, is a college, university, or graduate student studying the required coursework in pedagogy, as well as their specialty, but doesn't enter the supervised teaching portion of their training (Mena et al.,2017).

In this study, the pre-service teacher refers to Pre-service teachers under Government-funded Teacher Education Policy in China.

iii. Early childhood education: Early childhood education is education for preschool children. From the organization's perspective, it includes preschool education in the family and education in preschool education institutions (nursery, kindergarten) (Wu, 2019).

In this research, early childhood education (narrow sense) refers to the teaching that 3-6-year-old children receive in a kindergarten environment in China.

iv. University: A university is an institution of higher (or tertiary) education and research that awards degrees in various academic disciplines. Universities typically provide undergraduate education and postgraduate education (Zhong, 2019).

In this study, universities refer to the education departments of various provinces in China to strengthen the construction of rural teachers in local cities in different provinces that generally provide undergraduate education, which differ from the universities directly under the Ministry of Education of China (a group of universities now managed by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China).

v. Pre-service teachers under Government-funded Teacher Education Policy in local colleges and universities: Government-funded pre-service teachers in local colleges and universities refer to student teachers in local colleges and universities under Government-funded Teacher Education Policy by provinces to strengthen the rural teaching force.

In this study, Pre-service teachers under Government-funded Teacher Education Policy refer to pre-service preschool teachers trained by local institutions in a free implementation.

vi. Motivation: Motivation is one's direction to behavior, or what causes a person to want to repeat behavior, a set of forces that acts behind the motives (Schunk &

In this study, the motivation indicates the internal psychological state that directly promotes pre-service preschool teachers to choose a career as a teacher.

vii. Perceived teaching ability: refer to an individual's assessment of their teaching ability (Dixson et al., 2016).

In this context, perceived teaching ability refers to the pre-service preschool teachers' self-perception of their teaching abilities.

viii. Fallback career: A fallback career can be defined as a second career choice should one's first choice in a career not be available (McLean et al., 2019).

In this context, the fallback career refers to pre-service preschool teachers' entrance to the teaching profession because they cannot accept other career options or are unsure of what kind of work they want.

ix. Utility value: Utility value is the individual's perception that certain factors are important and helpful for future goals and career planning. (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020).

In this context, utility value includes social and personal utility values (Watt & Richard, 2007). Social utility values refer to the pre-service preschool teachers' contribution that teaching can make to society. Personal utility value means pre-service preschool teachers' reasons for choosing teaching as a career depend on their personal life goals.

x. Socialisation influences: in the FIT-Choice scale, Socialisation influences refer to prior teaching and learning experiences, social influence, and social dissuasion (Watt & Richardson, 2007).

In this context, Socialisation influences refer to the motivational factors' influences like "previous learning or teaching experiences" and "significant others" on the pre-service preschool teachers' choice to enter a teaching career.

xi. Teacher interest: teacher interest comprises three dimensions: subject interest, didactic interest and educational interest. Subject interest refers to the subject taught (e.g., physics) and aspects of the broader issue acquired in teacher education (e.g.,

primary school teaching). Didactic interest refers to a teacher's interest in teaching methods, pedagogical literature, and how best to prepare content for teaching. Educational interest refers to an interest in the educational aspects of the teaching profession (Schiefele & Schaffner, 2015).

In this context, teacher interest refers to the pre-service preschool teachers' subject interest, didactic interest and educational interest in their major.

xii. Task demand: Task demand measures the extent to which teachers perceive teaching as a highly skilled profession with high levels of expert career and an emotionally demanding profession (Moodley & Gaigher, 2017).

In this study, task demand refers to pre-service preschool teachers' perceptions of instructional requirements, expert career, knowledge, and task high demand of being a preschool teacher.

xiii. Task reward: task reward refers to the extent to which teachers perceive the social status, salary, and value of their self-profession (Moodley & Gaigher, 2017).

In this study, task reward refers to how pre-service preschool teachers perceive the social status, salary, and value of the preschool teaching profession.

xiv. Professional identity: Professional identity is the degree to which a person identifies with their profession and perception of membership (Yi, 2017).

In this context, professional identity refers to pre-service preschool teachers' confidence in their career choice, their sense of self-fulfillment as teachers, and the extent to which they view their profession as a new mission and challenge.

xv. Career choice satisfaction: career choice satisfaction refers to pre-service teachers' satisfaction with their teaching career choice (Richardson & Watt, 2007).

In this study, career choice satisfaction refers to the extent to which pre-service preschool teachers are satisfied with their preschool teaching career choice.

1.9 Contribution of Research

In reviewing the existing literature, the previous literature has provided empirical evidence about teaching motivation (Perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialisation influences and teacher interest) and perceptions about teaching (task demand and task return) (Suryani et al., 2016; Henshall et al., 2018). There is a lack of research to show the positive role of teaching motivation, perceptions about teaching, professional identity and career choice satisfaction within one framework. On the contrary, the existing literature mainly focuses on exploring the levels of teachers' teaching motivation and perceptions about teaching. Still, it does not address how these two variables play a role in influencing teachers' career choice satisfaction. This research uses the extended model of the factor influencing teacher career choice (FIT-Choice) (Watt & Richardson, 2007) to explore the relationship between them further. However, in the context of China, few

studies have examined the comprehensive effect of teaching motivation and influencing factors on PPTGFTEPLUC's career choice satisfaction. Few have examined the interaction between each dimension and the effect of dimensional differences.

Given this, this model will add professional identity, which will be regarded as an essential driving force for teachers' career choices. With such choices, this research has a better insight into the antecedent variables of teaching motivation, perceptions about teaching, and professional identity. It clearly understands how they influence PPTGFTEPLUC's career choice satisfaction and contribute to the existing literature.

Therefore, this study clarified the concept of each dimension by examining the influence of the dimensions of teaching motivation, perceptions about teaching, professional identity, and the interaction between the dimensions. In addition, the research results can also provide empirical evidence for the role of dimensions and the relationship between dimensions

Hence, it can be believed that the expanded and verified scale will increase the index library of the critical career choice satisfaction model for researchers to use confidently. And the revised scale can provide empirical evidence for an in-depth understanding of the effects of teaching motivation, perceptions about teaching, and professional identity on career choice satisfaction.

Considering the importance of empirical research in investigating career choice satisfaction, this study first broadened the conceptual and operational understanding



of career choice satisfaction. Specifically, this study empirically explains the effect of career choice satisfaction and validates the measurement scale used. Secondly, this study contributes to the existing literature by examining and validating the effects between PPTGFTEPLUC's career choice satisfaction and its antecedent variables (Perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialisation influences, teacher interest, task demand, task return and professional identity) to improve the understanding of the conditions under which antecedent variables influence career choice satisfaction. Finally, this study emphasizes the mediating role of professional identity, enriching existing research and broadening the research framework, making a more meaningful theory contribution.

The numerous difficulties the teaching profession faces in attracting and retaining teachers are mainly due to the education sector's lack of a clear understanding of what factors effectively influence teachers' decisions to remain in the profession over time (Guo & Sun, 2018). This study investigated the multidimensional effects of teaching motivation, perceptions about teaching, and professional identity on career choice satisfaction, and the findings may provide accurate and comprehensive guidance on how the education sector can attract and retain quality teachers. Specifically, by indicating that the dimensions of teaching motivation, perceptions about teaching, and professional identity can strongly influence career choice satisfaction, this study prompts the education sector to realize the potential of these factors in driving career choice satisfaction. It helps the education sector to plan and develop sound management strategies. In addition, a validated career choice satisfaction scale can serve as an essential tool for the education sector to assess the quality of their education. It contributes to the



management of the government and the education sector. Table 1.1 summarizes the contributions of this study.

Table 1.1

Contributions of This Research

Area of contribution	Level of contribution	
	replication	extension
Conceptual	clarify the concept of Perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialisation influences, task demand, task return and career choice satisfaction	add the concept of professional identity and teacher interest (subject interest, didactic interest, educational interest)
Methodological	Verify the validity and reliability of scales to measure dimensions of Perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialisation influences, task demand, task return and career choice satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Verify the validity and reliability of scales to measure dimensions of Perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialisation influences, task demand, task return, teacher interest, professional identity and career choice satisfaction; b. Test the applicability of the extended FIT-Choice model in China context; c. Test the effect of the mediating role of professional identity. d. Use the mixed method to explore the influencing factors.
Empirical	confirm the interaction between Perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialisation influences, task demand, task return and career choice satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. verify the integrated effect of Perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialisation influences, task demand, task return, teacher interest, and professional identity; b. Test the differential effect of dimensions in Perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialisation influences, task demand, task return, and teacher interest; explore the mediating effect of professional identity on the relationship between the predictors and career choice satisfaction
Managerial	Provide accurate and comprehensive guidance on how to formulate and justify career choice satisfaction strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide a tool to evaluate pre-service preschool teachers' retention; b. Understanding why individuals choose to become preschool teachers is critical to better preparing teachers for success c. Provide helpful information for guiding preparation. d. Provides teacher educators with information to design relevant and meaningful curricula, instruction, and experiences that will enhance the success of recruitment and retention efforts

1.10 Limitations

This study provides new insights into the career choice satisfaction of pre-service teachers in the context of the Government-funded Teacher Education Policy in local universities in China. While this study has contributed to career choice satisfaction, this study, like any other, is limited by several factors like any other study. To refine the proposed framework, it is necessary to address further theoretical and empirical research limitations. Some of the limitations discussed below may provide a basis for future research.

Firstly, our study did not collect other respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, family characteristics such as annual household income, parent's education level and occupation. These characteristics may also play an essential role in pre-service preschool teachers' career choice satisfaction under the Government-funded Teacher Education Policy of local universities in China and should be included in future studies. While many studies focus on pre-service teachers' teaching motivation and the impact on teaching, there is little evidence of the demographic characteristics of pre-service teachers or other aspiring teachers. One study of multiple pre-service preschool teachers in India found that these teachers typically came from families in urban areas of lower socio-economic status and held more traditional views than secular rationality (Bawane, 2021).

Few studies have been conducted worldwide in the last decade that specifically addresses the relationship between gender factors and career choice satisfaction among pre-service preschool teachers, and the OECD has reported that education is one of the most gender-segregated areas among the 23 countries participating in the



OECD International Teaching and Learning Survey (Gümüş & Bellibaş, 2021). In a cross-national study comparing the teacher motivation of pre-service preschool teachers in Oman and Canada, Klassen et al. (2011) found differences in the impact of gender roles on teaching aspirations. For Omani teachers, gender played an essential motivator for pre-service preschool teachers. At the same time, the findings did not support the Canadian approach to gender roles as a factor influencing teaching motivation. The Malaysian study also found that gender influenced students' choice to become preschool teachers. Female respondents would know the interconnection between career goals and future family and personal goals. The females in the study also reported that they were more likely to be influenced by their parents and wanted a job that matched their parental status (Aarntzen et al., 2022), which was also reflected at times in the interview findings of this study. Similar results were reported in a study conducted in Taiwan. It found that becoming a preschool teacher was suitable for girls because it offered higher social status, stability and flexibility in raising children (Abotsi et al., 2019).

Furthermore, Other studies in Belgium have shown that female pre-service preschool teachers emphasize the subject matter, acquisition of skills and knowledge, personal development and balancing work and family responsibilities. In contrast, men in this study emphasized holidays, spare time and active social life (Fray & Gore, 2018). Research from China suggests that females teach young children from extrinsic motivations of altruism, intrinsic and influence, while males choose careers based on extrinsic and monetary motivations. While both men and women reported intrinsic reasons for selecting the teaching career, women were likelier than men to report altruistic and intrinsic reasons (Shang et al., 2022). In a similar study, Alanezi



(2022) found that female pre-service preschool teachers had stronger altruistic motivations than male pre-service teachers. However, the authors also noted that this influence was small, so that the results may have less practical relevance. Furthermore, Karacabey et al.'s study found that gender was not considered to have any particular significance on preschool teachers' careers. In contrast, race and sexual orientation were considered to impact teachers' careers (Bozkus, 2019).

Meanwhile, few studies have examined age as a variable influencing the career choices of preschool pre-service teachers. In a study conducted in Belgium, Struyven et al., (2012) examined pre-service teachers' motivations according to the participant's age. They found that 18-year-olds aspired to be independent and gain confidence, while 17-18 and 19-22-year-olds were more interested in an active social life and good job prospects than older students. The older group (23 years and over) was interested in personal development. However, no significant differences were found between these student groups regarding their desire to help children (Struyven et al., 2012). A study of preschool pre-service preschool teachers in Brunei found no effect of age on pre-service preschool teachers' teaching motivation. However, older students did report less motivation to work with children (Shak, 2022).

A researcher from Pakistan stated that preschool teachers in Pakistan and around the world are generally dissatisfied with their jobs, which leads to high turnover and unfavorable performance, and that the most critical factor for career choice satisfaction is self-efficacy, followed by good working conditions (Bhutta, 2020). career choice satisfaction differed significantly between married and unmarried, but personal progress, achievement and development, responsibility for performing duties



in the workplace, and recognition also increased teachers' career choice satisfaction (Ali, 2017). There was no significant difference in career choice satisfaction between public and private preschool teachers, but senior teachers were more satisfied than regular teachers. Factors such as work environment, salary and promotion policies were the main factors of career choice satisfaction among school teachers in Bangladesh (Sultana et al., 2017). It has also been found that the career choice satisfaction of teachers with more than five years of experience in preschool education is higher than that of junior teachers, especially in terms of factors such as salary, physical conditions, cooperation status and organizational climate, while the career choice satisfaction of teachers such as those in public kindergartens is influenced by factors such as socio-economic and demographic factors, i.e., career satisfaction of older and younger teachers is statistically significant (Şahin & Sak, 2015). Some research findings show no significant difference in career satisfaction between government-, NGO-, or university-educated teacher educators in India (Mishra & Dkhar, 2016). Differences in career choice satisfaction have practical implications for education authorities and school leaders. They lead them to use different management styles and motivational strategies for different socio-demographic characteristics to increase teachers' career choice satisfaction. Therefore, our study did not collect other respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, family characteristics such as annual household income, parent's education level and occupation, which are the delimitation in this study.

Secondly, a sample of 508 Government-funded pre-service preschool teachers from local colleges and universities in China was selected for the study using a stratified sampling method. Due to the stratified sampling procedure used in choosing





Fujian provinces as an example, the research has a limitation regarding the capacity to generalize for the entire teacher population of the country. While a fixed sample is reasonable to ensure overall representativeness, the validity and generalizability of the results may be limited by reporting evidence from a single country and preschool discipline, and therefore the results of this study may not necessarily be generalizable beyond the overall population being studied. This study was conducted in a Chinese context. It is unclear whether our findings can be applied to other cultural contexts. In a study comparing the motivation of pre-service preschool teachers from Australia, the USA, Germany and Norway using the FIT-Choice model, teaching motivation varied by country of residence (Watt et al., 2012). Australian pre-service preschool teachers scored higher on career choice satisfaction than Job Security factors from the USA, Germany and Norway.



In contrast, for pre-service preschool teachers in the USA, family time was seen because, more importantly, preschool teachers in Norway scored lower on social utility than the other country factors. Overall, however, the four countries have more similarities than differences in motivation. Replication of this study is essential to confirm the validity of the model and the generalization of the findings to other settings. Future studies may use simple random sampling and test the proposed framework in different contexts, especially in different countries, disciplines, and samples.

Thirdly, the current research is limited to studying the effects of Perceived teaching abilities, fallback career, personal utility value, social utility value, socialization influences, teacher interest, task demand, task return, and professional





identity on career choice satisfaction to show teachers' willingness and retention in this profession. The variables omitted in this study may significantly affect career choice satisfaction. Examples of such variables are professional engagement and career development aspiration etc. Other antecedents are proposed in the widely used pre-service teacher career selection background model, namely Watt & Richardson's PECDA model (Poon et al., 2019; Karakiş, 2021). Moreover, the five factors associated with their highest career choice satisfaction were intrinsic value, perceived teaching ability, desire to contribute to society, positive teaching and learning experiences and willingness to work with children and young people. Other studies have also compared career choice satisfaction among pre-service preschool teachers from different countries of residence (Shang et al., 2022), who found that religion and social desirability factors were essential factors influencing career motivation and career satisfaction among pre-service preschool teachers in Oman. As well as Lin et al. (2012) found that American students were more enthusiastic about teaching and working with children and improving their careerism through a study of career choice satisfaction of pre-service preschool teachers in China and the United States, while extrinsic factors were the most influential factors affecting career choice satisfaction of the Chinese. This study found that most of PPTGFTEPLUC had not received internship training. It thus had few intrinsic factors influencing their career choice satisfaction and professional identity other than teacher interest. Despite the differences between countries, there are still many similarities in career choice satisfaction and professional identity among teachers globally. Research on pre-service preschool teachers' career motivation and perceptions about teaching continues to be relevant. While it is prudent to generalize the findings of this study to other contexts, the results of this study can provide a reference and comparison for



other countries to develop further and improve the pre-service preschool teachers' education system and individual teachers.

Fourth, the potential function of policy changes, era background, professional commitment, and teacher-child relationship should also be considered because they have been empirically proven to affect teacher career choice satisfaction significantly (Chen & Phillips, 2018). Therefore, future work should investigate whether joining other relevant structures will improve the prediction of career choice satisfaction, thereby enhancing the explanatory power of the research framework.

Fifth, this study used a cross-sectional design to provide a link between motivational factors and career choice satisfaction of PPTGFTEPLUC at a single time.

Still, under the Government-funded Teacher Education Policy in local universities in China, future research could use a longitudinal design to investigate the temporal relationship between them.

Sixth, this study relied on self-reported assessments. Possible response and recall bias may limit the accuracy of self-reported data.

To summarize, future research may need to incorporate these constructs to determine which constructs are more influenced by factors such as teachers' motivation and perceptions about teaching. Although it has been suggested that career choice satisfaction may lead to other outcomes, such as professional commitment, professional engagement, career development aspirations, etc., this study limits career choice satisfaction to the final relationship outcome. Therefore,



studying the effect of career choice satisfaction on other results (including professional commitment, professional engagement, and career development aspirations) will bring fruitful results to future research.

1.11 Research Structure

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the issues related to the subject study and clarifies the basic ideas of the study. Chapter 2 critically reviews the relevant literature on motivation to teach, career perceptions, and professional identity, considers important constructs to be included in the proposed framework, and discusses the hypothesis to be tested. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology for testing the hypothesis. Chapter 4 presents and explains the empirical results derived from the hypothesis testing. Chapter 5 discusses the main elements of the study, and insights into the study are also pointed out, suggestions for future research are provided and conclusions are drawn.

1.12 Conclusion

This chapter introduces the issues related to the research and clarifies the basic ideas of the research. In particular, this chapter outlines the need for research on career choice satisfaction. It points out the shortcomings of the existing literature on the FIT-Choice model and the role of predicting teacher career choice satisfaction. This chapter then outlines the questions to be addressed in this study, the purpose of the



study, research hypotheses, the contribution and limitation of the study, the operational definition, and the general structure of this study, etc. The second chapter discusses the existing literature and describes the theoretical basis and research framework.