

Organizational commitment and teacher wellness: The mediating role of mission among kindergarten teachers

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Abstract

Teacher well-being is increasingly recognized as critical for sustaining quality early childhood education. This study examined the relationships among organizational commitment, sense of mission, and wellness among kindergarten teachers in Taiwan, with a focus on the mediating role of mission. Using a cross-sectional survey, data were collected from 655 teachers across public, private, and community-based institutions. Measures included the Three-Component Model of Organizational Commitment, a mission scale capturing teachers' sense of purpose, and a wellness scale assessing professional satisfaction and functioning. Descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVAs, correlations, multiple regression, and mediation analysis using PROCESS were employed. Results showed significant demographic differences in organizational commitment by gender, age, tenure, job type, and education, although effect sizes were generally small. Correlation analyses revealed that mission was strongly associated with both commitment and wellness. Regression analyses demonstrated that affective commitment, continuance commitment, and mission were significant predictors of wellness, whereas normative commitment and demographic factors were not. Mediation analysis confirmed that mission partially mediated the effect of organizational commitment on wellness, highlighting its role as a psychological resource. These findings underscore the importance of fostering both institutional attachment and a sense of mission to promote sustainable teacher well-being. Implications for leadership practices, teacher development, and policy are discussed, along with recommendations for future research.

Keywords: organizational commitment, teacher wellness, sense of mission, early childhood education, mediation analysis

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1. Introduction

Teacher well-being has emerged as a critical concern in education systems worldwide (Acton & Glasgow, 2015; Spilt et al., 2011), particularly within early childhood education (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2014). Not only limited to teachers, but also in students within all levels of the academe (Edara et al., 2021a, 2021b). International research consistently emphasizes that the quality of early education is closely tied to the well-being and professional commitment of teachers (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2014; Kwon et al., 2022). Kindergarten teachers face unique challenges, including high emotional labor, role ambiguity, and balancing instructional and caregiving responsibilities. These demands often place them at risk of stress and burnout, which in turn can negatively affect children's learning outcomes and school climate (Ng et al., 2023; Schaack et al., 2020). As such, understanding the factors that contribute to teacher well-being is a pressing issue for educational policy and practice, especially in contexts where early childhood education is undergoing reform and expansion.

Organizational commitment has long been recognized as a fundamental predictor of work-related outcomes, grounded in theories of organizational behavior and social exchange (Meyer & Allen, 1997). When teachers demonstrate a high degree of commitment to their institutions, they are more likely to exhibit positive attitudes, resilience, and engagement, which enhance their overall well-being (Graham, 1996; Shu, 2022). At the same time, scholars highlight the importance of a sense of mission or purpose as an internal psychological resource that links professional commitment to well-being (Steger, 2017). Within this framework, mission functions as a motivational mediator: teachers who perceive alignment between their personal values and their organization's mission derive meaning from their work, which in turn supports higher levels of wellness. Thus, organizational commitment is expected to influence well-being both directly and indirectly through mission.

A growing body of literature highlights the central role of organizational commitment in predicting teachers' professional outcomes. Studies show that teachers' commitment is shaped not only by institutional support but also by organizational culture and leadership. For instance, Zhang et al. (2023) found that perceived organizational support significantly predicted occupational commitment among male kindergarten teachers, with occupational well-being serving as a mediator. Similarly, research with high school teachers in Iran demonstrated that both spiritual health and psychological well-being were strong predictors of organizational commitment (Heidari et al., 2022). Broader organizational frameworks also suggest that leadership practices and collective teacher efficacy influence teachers' dedication to organizational values (Ross & Gray, 2007), while healthy school climates support teachers' sense of efficacy and morale (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). Together, these studies underscore that organizational commitment is a multidimensional construct shaped by workplace context, well-being, and leadership.

Parallel research emphasizes the significance of teacher well-being for retention and professional sustainability. Schaack et al. (2020) showed that job demands such as lack of collegial support and limited job control predicted burnout and turnover intentions among early childhood teachers, whereas shared vision within organizations reduced these risks. In rural China, Yan et al. (2022) demonstrated that enabling organizational structures and director leadership jointly predicted early childhood teachers' well-being. Qualitative evidence further illustrates how directors themselves experience stress, support, and wellness, with implications for the broader workforce (Bosire et al., 2023). Collectively, these findings highlight the interplay between organizational environment, teacher well-being, and the risk of attrition in early childhood education.

Another important line of inquiry concerns the role of mission, meaning, and spirituality in sustaining teacher well-being. In China, Zhang et al. (2025) found that preschool teachers' professional and organizational

identities predicted their occupational well-being, with sense of calling serving as a mediator. Likewise, Herman et al. (2023) reported that workplace spirituality; encompassing meaningful work, sense of community, and value alignment, which was positively associated with early childhood professionals' intention to stay. Beyond preschool contexts, studies indicate that spirituality can mediate the effects of leadership on teacher efficacy (Fairos, 2025). These studies converge on the notion that mission and meaning are critical psychological resources that link organizational contexts with teacher outcomes. Yet, despite this growing evidence, limited research has explicitly tested how teachers' sense of mission mediates between organizational commitment and well-being in early childhood education.

Although a growing body of research has examined teacher stress, burnout, and job satisfaction, relatively fewer studies have focused on the interplay between organizational commitment, mission, and wellness among kindergarten teachers. This gap is significant, as early childhood educators often work in demanding environments with limited resources, yet their professional wellness is crucial for sustaining quality education. By examining both direct and mediated pathways, the present study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how institutional and psychological factors jointly shape teacher well-being. Such insights are valuable not only for academic discourse but also for informing school leadership, teacher development programs, and policy initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable early childhood education systems.

Building on this rationale, the study addresses the following objectives:

- ✧ To examine group differences in organizational commitment, mission, and wellness among kindergarten teachers across demographic variables (gender, position, education, age, and tenure).
- ✧ To explore the correlations among organizational commitment, mission, and wellness.
- ✧ To test whether organizational commitment significantly predicts wellness.
- ✧ To investigate whether mission mediates the relationship between organizational commitment and wellness.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design and Procedure

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative design to examine the relationships among organizational commitment, mission, and wellness in kindergarten teachers. The design was appropriate for capturing current perceptions and testing mediation pathways among psychological and organizational variables at a single point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Paper-based surveys were administered in person or via local professional associations. Before participation, teachers were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw or omit items at any time without penalty. To ensure confidentiality, no personal identifying information was collected, and all responses were recorded anonymously. The study adhered to the ethical standards of the Declaration of Helsinki.

2.2 Participants and Sampling

A total of 800 paper-based surveys were distributed between March and May 2025 through kindergarten networks and professional associations across Taiwan, using stratified sampling to ensure representation of different regions and institutional types (public, private, and community-based kindergartens) (Buddhakulsomsiri & Parthanadee, 2008). Of these, 655 surveys were returned and valid, yielding a response rate of 81.9%. Participation was voluntary, and teachers could skip questions without penalty. Demographic information collected included gender, position, educational background, teaching tenure, and age.

A total of 655 kindergarten teachers in Taiwan participated in the study. As shown in Table 1, most participants were female (97.4%), with only a small proportion identifying as male (2.6%). In terms of professional position, more than half of the respondents were childcare workers (52.6%), followed by kindergarten teachers (16.6%), nursery staff (20.6%), assistant childcare workers (5.3%), and substitute childcare workers (4.4%), with a small number categorized as other (0.5%). Regarding educational background, the majority held a university degree in early childhood education (55.9%), while smaller proportions reported junior college Early Childhood Education (ECE) training (11.2%), vocational high school ECE training (7.3%), or non-ECE university degrees (8.3%). A smaller percentage held advanced graduate degrees (ECE-related master's or higher = 5.5%; non-ECE master's or higher = 1.8%). Participants' teaching experience in their current institution varied: 32.8% had 2–4 years of tenure, 26.5% had less than 2 years, 20.9% had 10 years or more, and 19.8% had between 5 and 9 years. Age distribution was also diverse: 20.4% were aged 26–29 years, 18.6% were aged 35–39 years, 18.4% were aged 30–34 years, and 13.1% were aged 40–44 years. Smaller proportions were aged 25 years or younger (9.3%), 45–49 years (9.5%), or 50 years and above (10.8%).

Table 1*Participant Demographics (N = 655)*

Variable	Category	<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Male	16	2.6
	Female	588	97.4
Position	Kindergarten Teacher	101	16.6
	Childcare Worker	319	52.6
	Assistant Childcare Worker	32	5.3
	Substitute Childcare Worker	27	4.4
	Nursery Staff	125	20.6
	Others	3	0.5
Education	Senior High School	34	5.5
	Vocational High School (ECE)	45	7.3
	Junior College (ECE)	69	11.2
	Junior College (non-ECE)	27	4.4
	University (ECE)	343	55.9
	University (non-ECE)	51	8.3
	Master's & above (ECE)	34	5.5
Master's & above (non-ECE)	11	1.8	
Years in Current Institution	< 2 years	162	26.5
	2–4 years	201	32.8
	5–9 years	121	19.8
	≥ 10 years	128	20.9
Age	≤ 25 years	57	9.3
	26–29 years	125	20.4
	30–34 years	113	18.4
	35–39 years	114	18.6
	40–44 years	80	13.1
	45–49 years	58	9.5
	≥ 50 years	66	10.8

Note. ECE = Early Childhood Education. Percentages are based on valid responses; missing values range from 6.3% to 7.8% across variables.

2.3 Instruments

Organizational Commitment (OC) - Organizational commitment was assessed using the *Three-Component Model of Organizational Commitment* developed by Meyer and Allen (1991) and later extended by Meyer et al. (1993). The model conceptualizes commitment as a psychological state that binds an individual to an organization and influences the decision to remain employed. It comprises three distinct but related components: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Each subscale was measured with four items, adapted to the childcare context. Overall Cronbach (1951) Alpha reliability of the OC scale is computed at .78, indicating adequate internal consistency (Cohen et al., 2007). Responses were rated on a Likert (1932) type scale (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The following are the subscales:

Affective Commitment (AC) - Affective commitment reflects employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees with strong affective commitment remain with an organization because they want to. Sample items include – “*I am very willing to talk with others about the childcare institution where I work.*” and “*This childcare institution has great personal meaning for me.*”

Continuance Commitment (CC) - Continuance commitment refers to the perceived costs associated with leaving the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees with strong continuance commitment stay because they need to, perceiving that leaving would result in loss of benefits or significant personal sacrifice. Sample items include – “*I do not feel that I am a part of the ‘family’ of this childcare institution.*” (reverse-coded) and “*I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to this childcare institution.*” (reverse-coded).

Normative Commitment (NC) - Normative commitment captures employees' sense of obligation to remain with the organization (Meyer et al., 1993). Employees with high normative commitment remain because they feel they ought to, often due to internalized values of loyalty or responsibility. Sample items include - “*Even if I had better job opportunities, I would feel it is not right to leave this childcare institution.*” and “*I would choose to continue working in this childcare institution because I believe ‘loyalty’ is very important and I feel a personal responsibility to stay.*”

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to validate the measurement model of organizational commitment, consisting of three latent factors: AC, CC, and NC, each measured by four observed indicators. The model demonstrated good fit to the data, $\chi^2(51) = 226.34$, $p < .001$, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .97, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = .96, Root Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .07 (90% Confidence Interval; CI [.06, .08]), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = .05 (Awang, 2014; Byrne, 2010; Hu & Bentler, 1999). All standardized factor loadings were statistically significant ($p < .001$) and ranged from .68 to .98 for affective commitment, .72 to .86 for emotional commitment, and .76 to .80 for normative commitment, exceeding the recommended threshold of .50. Reliability and validity indices supported construct adequacy. The average variance extracted (AVE) values were .79 (affective commitment; AC), .65 (continuance commitment; CC), and .60 (normative commitment; NC), exceeding the .50 criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The composite reliability (CR) values were .94, .88, and .86, respectively, all above .70. Internal consistency was also high, with Cronbach's alpha values of .93 (AC), .88 (CC), and .86 (NC). Taken together, the CFA results provided strong evidence for the three-factor organizational commitment structure with satisfactory convergent validity, internal consistency, and overall model fit (Fan et al., 1999; Schreiber et al., 2006).

Sense of Mission (SM) - Sense of mission in work or mission was assessed using an eight-item scale developed to capture teachers' experience of their work as a calling in the field of early childhood education and care. The construct of mission has been widely conceptualized as a deep sense of purpose, destiny, and dedication to one's work (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Dik & Duffy, 2007). Whereas organizational commitment reflects an attachment to one's institution, sense of mission emphasizes the perception that one's professional role is personally meaningful, central to life identity, and aligned with a higher purpose. Items reflect dimensions such as personal fulfillment, persistence, destiny, and centrality of work. Responses were collected using a seven (7) point Likert-type scale (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The measure demonstrated strong reliability in this study (Cronbach $\alpha = .95$; CR = .95; AVE = .69). Sample items include “*Compared with other things, what I enjoy most is early childhood education and care work.*” and “*I feel that my connection with early childhood education and care is like destiny.*” Despite less than optimal global fit indices in the CFA ($\chi^2(20) = 459.86$, $p < .001$, CFI = .91, TLI = .87, RMSEA = .18, SRMR = .04), all standardized factor loadings were strong (.79–.87) and statistically significant ($p < .001$), supporting the construct validity of the scale.

Teacher Wellness (TW) - Teacher well-being was measured using a four-item scale designed to assess educators' perceptions of effectiveness, clarity, value, and satisfaction in their work. Teacher well-being is commonly defined as a positive evaluation of one's professional functioning and experiences, encompassing the

ability to perform daily tasks effectively, maintain clarity in responsibilities, derive meaning from work, and feel satisfaction in accomplishments (Collie et al., 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). The items capture teachers' experiences of completing work effectively, maintaining clarity in work progress, feeling valued and meaningful in their role, and reflecting positively on their past achievements. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Sample items include – “*I am able to effectively complete various daily work tasks.*” and “*When I look back on my work history, I feel satisfied with my past performance.*” Analyses showed strong internal consistency (Cronbach $\alpha = .87$; CR = .87; AVE = .62). However, the CFA results indicated mediocre global model fit, $\chi^2(2) = 154.24, p < .001$, CFI = .89, TLI = .87, RMSEA = .034, SRMR = .06. Despite this, all standardized factor loadings were statistically significant ($p < .001$) and ranged from .70 to .84, suggesting that the items loaded meaningfully on the well-being construct.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 20; on loan from the university) and the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2022). Descriptive statistics and group comparisons (t-tests and one-way ANOVAs) were conducted to examine demographic differences. Pearson's correlations were computed to explore associations among variables. Simple linear regression tested the predictive effect of organizational commitment on wellness. Finally, mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS Model 4, with 5,000 bootstrap samples to estimate indirect effects through *mission*. A 95% confidence interval was used for all inferential tests.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Gender differences

Independent-samples *t*-tests were conducted to examine gender differences in OC, SM, and TW. As shown in Table 2, there was a significant gender difference in NC, $t(602) = 2.73, p = .006$, Cohen's $d = 0.22$, with female teachers (Mean; $M = 3.97$) reporting higher NC compared to male teachers ($M = 3.43$). No significant gender differences were found for AC, CC, overall OC, SM, or TW, $ps > .05$. Effect sizes for all comparisons were small, ranging from $d = 0.04$ to 0.22, suggesting minimal practical differences across gender (Cohen et al., 2007). The findings seem interesting, however, as the number of female teachers greatly outnumbered male teachers; the findings might be slightly biased.

Table 2

T-test results for gender differences

Variable	Female Mean	Male Mean	$t(602)$	p	Cohen's d
AC	2.98	3.38	-1.47	0.143	-0.12
CC	4.23	3.94	1.70	0.090	0.14
NC	3.97	3.43	2.73	0.006	0.22
OC	3.73	3.59	1.05	0.294	0.09
SM	5.89	5.63	1.06	0.291	0.09
TW	4.27	4.20	0.48	0.635	0.04

The findings indicate that female kindergarten teachers demonstrated significantly stronger normative commitment than their male counterparts, suggesting that women in early childhood education may feel a greater moral or value-based obligation to remain in their institutions. Interestingly, no significant gender differences emerged for affective or continuance commitment, overall organizational commitment, sense of mission, or wellness. Prior research in China also notes that male preschool teachers often experience unique challenges such as role strain and stereotyping (Yan et al., 2022), but such effects may not have manifested strongly in this study due to sample imbalance. More important, the small effect sizes observed reinforce that gender differences in organizational attitudes and well-being among kindergarten teachers are limited, except for the domain of normative commitment. This suggests that both male and female teachers generally share similar levels of

mission orientation and wellness, but women may more strongly endorse professional loyalty as an internalized obligation. From a policy perspective, this underscores the importance of supporting male teachers in early childhood contexts, not only to enhance gender diversity but also to foster equal levels of organizational commitment through professional development, mentorship, and recognition structures.

3.2 Age group differences

A series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted to examine differences across age groups in OC, SM, and TW. Significant differences were observed for AC, $F(6, 606) = 2.62, p = .016$, partial $\eta^2 = .025$; CC, $F(6, 606) = 3.19, p = .004$, partial $\eta^2 = .031$; and overall OC, $F(6, 606) = 3.04, p = .006$, partial $\eta^2 = .029$. No significant differences were found for NC, $F(6, 606) = 1.20, p = .304$; SM, $F(6, 606) = 1.10, p = .361$; or TW, $F(6, 606) = 1.96, p = .069$. The effect sizes for AC, CC, and OC were small ($\eta^2 = .025-.031$), suggesting modest but meaningful age-related variations in organizational commitment (Cohen et al., 2007).

The results suggest that age significantly influences organizational commitment among kindergarten teachers, specifically in the domains of affective, continuance, and overall commitment. Older teachers may develop stronger affective and continuance bonds to their institutions due to accumulated professional experience, stability needs, and long-term investment in the workplace. This aligns with previous research showing that tenure and age predict stronger organizational ties, as teachers become more embedded within institutional structures and relationships (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Ross & Gray, 2007). Interestingly, no significant age group differences were found in normative commitment, suggesting that feelings of moral obligation to remain in the organization are relatively consistent across the lifespan. Similarly, sense of mission and wellness did not vary significantly by age, which echoes findings from Yan et al. (2022) and Herman et al. (2023) that professional meaning-making and well-being are shaped more by organizational culture and leadership than by demographic factors.

The modest effect sizes indicate that while age contributes to differences in organizational commitment, it is not the sole determinant. Other contextual variables, such as leadership style, collegial support, and institutional mission alignment, likely play a stronger role in shaping teachers' psychological engagement and well-being. From a practical perspective, these findings suggest that school leaders should consider age-related needs in supporting teachers: for example, providing mentoring and career development opportunities for younger teachers while recognizing loyalty and accumulated contributions of more experienced staff.

3.3 Job type differences

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences across job types (kindergarten teachers, childcare workers, assistant childcare workers, substitute workers, nursery staff, and others). Significant differences were found in AC, $F(5, 601) = 7.36, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .058$; CC, $F(5, 601) = 2.26, p = .047$, partial $\eta^2 = .018$; and overall OC, $F(5, 601) = 4.54, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .036$. No significant differences were observed for NC, $F(5, 601) = 0.35, p = .879$, SM, $F(5, 601) = 0.88, p = .495$, or TW, $F(5, 601) = 1.81, p = .109$. Effect sizes indicated that job type explained a moderate proportion of variance in AC ($\eta^2 = .058$), while the effects for CC and OC were small ($\eta^2 = .018-.036$).

The results reveal that job type is an important factor shaping organizational commitment, particularly in terms of affective and overall commitment. Kindergarten teachers, who typically carry both instructional and caregiving responsibilities, may form deeper emotional attachments to their institutions compared to assistant or substitute staff, whose roles are often more temporary or peripheral. This aligns with Meyer and Allen's (1997) framework, where affective commitment is linked to identification and emotional involvement with the organization. The finding that continuance commitment also differed across job types suggests that some groups; possibly full-time teachers and childcare workers, perceive higher costs associated with leaving, such as job security, benefits, or career continuity. In contrast, staff in more flexible or transitional roles (e.g., substitutes)

may feel less constrained, reflecting weaker continuance ties.

Interestingly, no significant differences emerged for sense of mission or wellness, suggesting that personal meaning-making and professional well-being are not strongly differentiated by job type. This could imply that mission is more closely tied to individual values and vocational identity (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Steger, 2017), rather than formal role categories. The moderate effect size for affective commitment ($\eta^2 = .058$) underscores that emotional attachment varies meaningfully across job types, and may be strongest for those in core teaching positions. This resonates with findings by Zhang et al. (2025), who reported that professional identity predicts occupational well-being among preschool teachers, highlighting the centrality of role-defined experiences in shaping commitment. From a practical perspective, these results suggest that institutional leaders should pay particular attention to the professional inclusion of assistant and substitute staff, who may feel less attached or obligated to the organization. Strengthening their integration through professional development, recognition, and participatory leadership could foster higher organizational commitment and reduce turnover risk in these roles.

3.4 Years working differences

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in OC, SM, and TW across years working or tenure groups (<2 years, 2–4 years, 5–9 years, and ≥ 10 years). Results showed significant differences for AC, $F(6, 606) = 2.62, p = .016$, partial $\eta^2 = .025$; CC, $F(6, 606) = 3.19, p = .004$, partial $\eta^2 = .031$; and overall OC, $F(6, 606) = 3.04, p = .006$, partial $\eta^2 = .029$. No significant differences were found for NC, $F(6, 606) = 1.20, p = .304$; SM, $F(6, 606) = 1.10, p = .361$; or TW, $F(6, 606) = 1.96, p = .069$. Effect sizes were small ($\eta^2 = .025-.031$), indicating modest tenure-related differences, with the largest variance explained in continuance commitment.

The findings suggest that tenure influences organizational commitment, particularly affective, continuance, and overall commitment. Teachers with longer tenure may experience stronger emotional bonds (affective commitment) due to established relationships with colleagues, parents, and the school community. At the same time, they may perceive higher costs associated with leaving (continuance commitment), given accumulated benefits, stability, and career investment. This is consistent with organizational behavior theory, where tenure enhances embeddedness and attachment to the workplace (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Shu, 2022). By contrast, teachers with shorter tenure may demonstrate weaker organizational bonds, possibly reflecting a trial stage in which professional fit and institutional culture are still being evaluated. Research in early childhood education also shows that newer teachers often face higher stress and turnover intentions due to adjustment challenges and limited institutional support (Schaack et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2022).

Interestingly, tenure was not associated with sense of mission or wellness. This suggests that teachers' perception of their work as meaningful and their subjective well-being may be relatively stable across career stages, shaped more by personal values and organizational climate than by length of service. Herman et al. (2023) similarly observed that workplace spirituality and meaning-making predict retention, independent of years of experience. Taken together, these results highlight the need for school leaders to support early-career teachers in building organizational ties, while also sustaining the engagement of long-tenured staff. Strategies could include mentorship programs for newcomers, recognition of veteran teachers' contributions, and inclusive leadership practices that foster a shared sense of belonging across all tenure groups.

3.5 Educational attainment differences

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in OC, SM, and TW across educational attainment groups (ranging from senior/vocational high school to graduate degrees). Significant differences were found in AC, $F(7, 606) = 4.58, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .050$; CC, $F(7, 606) = 2.99, p = .004$, partial $\eta^2 = .033$; NC, $F(7, 606) = 3.40, p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .038$; SM, $F(7, 606) = 2.04, p = .048$, partial $\eta^2 = .023$; and overall OC,

$F(7, 606) = 2.07, p = .045$, partial $\eta^2 = .023$. TW did not significantly differ across educational attainment, $F(7, 606) = 1.15, p = .329$, partial $\eta^2 = .013$. Effect sizes ranged from small to moderate, with the strongest variance explained for affective commitment ($\eta^2 = .050$).

Findings indicate that educational attainment significantly shapes organizational commitment and mission, but not wellness. Teachers with higher education levels (e.g., bachelor's or master's in early childhood education) may have stronger affective and normative commitment due to greater professional identity formation and alignment with institutional goals. This reflects Meyer and Allen's (1997) framework, where affective and normative bonds are reinforced by internalized values and training. Interestingly, continuance commitment was also higher among certain education groups, suggesting that advanced qualifications may lead teachers to perceive greater opportunity costs in leaving their institutions, given the investment of time, training, and career pathways. These findings are consistent with Zhang et al. (2025), who showed that professional identity predicts well-being and commitment among preschool teachers, with higher education often serving as a marker of stronger occupational identity. The fact that mission varied by education supports prior literature linking teacher preparation and advanced studies with vocational calling and meaning in work (Steger, 2017; Herman et al., 2023). Teachers with more specialized or advanced training may experience stronger purpose and fulfillment, while those with less formal training may view their role more pragmatically.

By contrast, no significant differences in teacher wellness emerged across education levels, echoing findings by Yan et al. (2022) that well-being is shaped more by organizational climate and leadership support than by qualifications alone. This suggests that while education strengthens commitment and sense of mission, it does not automatically translate into higher subjective well-being. From a practical perspective, these results highlight the importance of professional development and continuing education opportunities for teachers at all levels. Investing in education and training may not only enhance skills but also reinforce teachers' affective and normative bonds to their organizations, thereby supporting retention and reducing attrition risks.

3.6 Correlational analyses

Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationships among tenure, age, organizational commitment (and its three sub-dimensions: AC, CC, NC), sense of mission, and wellness (see Table 3). For *demographics*: Tenure was strongly correlated with age ($r = .54, p < .01$). Both tenure and age showed small but significant positive correlations with affective commitment (tenure: $r = .11, p < .01$; age: $r = .12, p < .01$), continuance commitment (tenure: $r = .13, p < .01$; age: $r = .12, p < .01$), and overall organizational commitment (tenure: $r = .13, p < .01$; age: $r = .10, p < .05$). Tenure also correlated positively with wellness ($r = .09, p < .05$).

As for *organizational commitment dimensions*: Affective commitment was positively associated with wellness ($r = .21, p < .01$) and strongly correlated with overall organizational commitment ($r = .61, p < .01$). Continuance commitment was positively associated with mission ($r = .69, p < .01$), wellness ($r = .50, p < .01$), and overall organizational commitment ($r = .74, p < .01$). Normative commitment correlated positively with mission ($r = .48, p < .01$), wellness ($r = .25, p < .01$), and overall organizational commitment ($r = .56, p < .01$), but negatively with affective commitment ($r = -.23, p < .01$).

For *mission and wellness*: Mission showed significant positive associations with wellness ($r = .44, p < .01$) and overall organizational commitment ($r = .55, p < .01$). Wellness also correlated moderately with overall organizational commitment ($r = .48, p < .01$). Taken together, these results indicate that organizational commitment and its dimensions are positively interrelated with mission and wellness, with mission emerging as a central construct that bridges organizational commitment and teacher well-being.

The correlation results support the proposed model linking organizational commitment, mission, and wellness. Mission was strongly correlated with both commitment (especially continuance: $r = .69$) and wellness ($r = .44$), reinforcing its theorized role as a psychological resource that helps teachers derive meaning from their work (Steger, 2017; Herman et al., 2023). This finding is consistent with Zhang et al. (2025), who reported that a

sense of calling mediates the link between professional identity and well-being among preschool teachers.

Affective and continuance commitment were both positively related to wellness ($r = .21$ and $.50$, respectively), suggesting that stronger emotional bonds and perceived investment in the organization contribute to teachers' professional flourishing. This echoes earlier research showing that committed teachers report higher morale and resilience (Shu, 2022; Ross & Gray, 2007). More so, the negative correlation between normative and affective commitment ($r = -.23$) suggests that obligation-based loyalty may sometimes conflict with genuine emotional attachment. This aligns with Meyer and Allen's (1997) model, where normative ties are more duty-driven, while affective commitment reflects intrinsic motivation. Teachers who remain "out of obligation" may not always feel emotionally engaged. Tenure and age showed small but consistent associations with commitment and wellness, supporting prior findings that longer service can strengthen organizational attachment (Yan et al., 2022). However, these effects were modest compared to the stronger psychological links among mission, commitment, and wellness. Overall, the correlation results provide initial support for the study's mediation hypothesis, pointing to mission as the mechanism through which organizational commitment enhances teacher wellness.

Table 3

Correlations among the variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Tenure	—							
2. Age	.536**	—						
3. Affective Commitment (AC)	.108**	.120**	—					
4. Continuance Commitment (CC)	.128**	.124**	.088*	—				
5. Normative Commitment (NC)	<.001	-.059	-.230**	.522**	—			
6. Mission	.060	.069	.037	.686**	.483**	—		
7. Wellness	.088*	.060	.210**	.501**	.254**	.437**	—	
8. Organizational Commitment (OC)	.126**	.104*	.608**	.739**	.555**	.552**	.480**	—

Note. Tenure = years in current institution. Age = teacher's chronological age. $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed).

3.7 Predictors of teacher wellness

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether dimensions of organizational commitment and sense of mission predicted teacher wellness (see Table 4). The overall model was significant, $F(26, 563) = 9.91$, $p < .001$, explaining 31% of the variance in wellness ($R^2 = .31$, Adj. $R^2 = .28$). Three predictors emerged as significant: AC ($\beta = .15$, $p < .001$), CC ($\beta = .35$, $p < .001$), and SM ($\beta = .19$, $p < .001$). These results indicate that teachers with stronger emotional bonds to their institution, higher perceived investment in staying, and greater sense of mission reported significantly greater well-being.

Table 4

Linear regression results for predicting teacher wellness

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	2.03	0.22	—	9.03	< .001
Affective Commitment (AC)	0.08	0.02	0.15	3.71	< .001
Continuance Commitment (CC)	0.29	0.04	0.35	6.45	< .001
Sense of Mission	0.11	0.03	0.19	3.87	< .001

Note. Model Fit: $R^2 = .31$, Adj. $R^2 = .28$, $F(26, 563) = 9.91$, $p < .001$.

The regression findings provide robust evidence that organizational commitment and sense of mission are central predictors of teacher wellness. Continuance commitment ($\beta = .35$) showed the strongest effect, suggesting that perceived stability and investment in one's institution enhance wellness by reducing uncertainty and providing professional security. While often interpreted as a "cost-based" form of attachment, in early childhood education settings, it may represent valued continuity that supports psychological well-being (Zhang

et al., 2023). In addition, teachers with a stronger sense of mission also reported greater wellness ($\beta = .19$). This finding underscores mission's role as a motivational mediator that transforms commitment into positive psychological outcomes. Consistent with research on calling and workplace spirituality (Steger, 2017; Herman et al., 2023), mission appears to sustain teachers' energy and resilience despite demanding job conditions.

Importantly, affective commitment ($\beta = .15$) also significantly predicted wellness, reflecting the importance of emotional attachment and identification with the organization. When teachers feel valued and connected to their workplace, they experience higher morale and engagement, aligning with prior work on teacher efficacy and resilience (Ross & Gray, 2007). Lastly, although not included in the final table, normative commitment and demographic factors (gender, job type, education, tenure, and age) were not significant predictors once affective, continuance, and mission were included. This suggests that psychological and organizational factors outweigh obligation-based or structural variables in predicting well-being (Yan et al., 2022). Overall, these results confirm that teacher wellness is best understood through the interplay of organizational commitment and sense of mission, highlighting the importance of fostering both emotional bonds and purposeful engagement in early childhood education.

3.8 Mediation analysis

A mediation analysis using PROCESS (Model 4; Hayes, 2022) was conducted to test whether sense of mission mediated the relationship between OC and teacher wellness. Here is the summary of the results (see also Table 5):

- Path a (OC → Mission): Organizational commitment significantly predicted mission, $B = 1.02$, $SE = 0.06$, $t = 16.90$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.90, 1.14].
- Path b (Mission → Wellness): Mission significantly predicted wellness, controlling for OC, $B = 0.14$, $SE = 0.02$, $t = 6.18$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.10, 0.19].
- Direct effect (c'): OC remained a significant predictor of wellness, $B = 0.36$, $SE = 0.04$, $t = 8.57$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.28, 0.44].
- Total effect (c): Without the mediator, OC significantly predicted wellness, $B = 0.50$, $SE = 0.04$, $t = 13.96$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.43, 0.57].
- Indirect effect (a × b): The bootstrapped indirect effect through mission was significant, $B = 0.14$, $BootSE = 0.03$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.20].

The standardized indirect effect was .14, with a partially standardized value of .26, indicating a moderate mediation effect. Since both the direct and indirect paths were significant, the mediation is partial rather than full.

Table 5

Mediation analysis results

Effect	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI [LL, UL]
Path a (OC → Mission)	1.02	0.06	16.9	< .001	[0.90, 1.14]
Path b (Mission → Wellness)	0.14	0.02	6.18	< .001	[0.10, 0.19]
Direct effect (c') (OC → Wellness)	0.36	0.04	8.57	< .001	[0.28, 0.44]
Total effect (c) (OC → Wellness)	0.5	0.04	13.96	< .001	[0.43, 0.57]
Indirect effect (OC → Mission → Wellness)	0.14	0.03	—	—	[0.09, 0.20]

Note. Indirect effects tested using 5,000 bootstrap samples. Partial mediation observed.

The mediation analysis confirmed that sense of mission partially mediates the relationship between organizational commitment and teacher wellness. Strong OC → Mission pathway; showed that organizational commitment was strongly associated with mission ($B = 1.02$), suggesting that teachers who feel attached to their institutions are more likely to experience their work as meaningful and aligned with a higher purpose. While, sense of mission significantly predicted wellness ($B = 0.14$), consistent with prior research emphasizing the importance of calling and workplace spirituality in sustaining educators' well-being (Steger, 2017; Herman et al., 2023). Lastly, even after accounting for mission, organizational commitment continued to directly predict wellness ($B = 0.36$). This indicates that while mission explains part of the relationship, commitment itself also exerts an independent effect. This echoes findings by Zhang et al. (2025), who noted that professional identity and calling jointly shape occupational well-being.

These results underscore the dual pathways through which commitment fosters wellness: (a) directly, by providing stability and emotional bonds, and (b) indirectly, by nurturing a deeper sense of mission. For practice, this suggests that fostering organizational cultures that emphasize shared mission and purpose may amplify the wellness benefits of teachers' commitment, thereby supporting retention and educational quality in early childhood education.

4. Conclusions

This study examined the interplay among organizational commitment, mission, and wellness in kindergarten teachers, highlighting the mediating role of mission. The findings confirmed that affective and continuance commitment, as well as a strong sense of mission, were significant predictors of teacher wellness. Moreover, mission partially mediated the relationship between organizational commitment and wellness, underscoring its value as a psychological resource that transforms institutional attachment into positive well-being outcomes. Together, the results emphasize that both organizational and motivational factors are essential in sustaining the well-being of early childhood educators, a critical workforce in ensuring quality education for young children.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design restricts causal inference; future studies employing longitudinal or experimental approaches could provide stronger evidence for the directionality of effects. Second, the reliance on self-reported measures may have introduced social desirability bias, suggesting the need for future research to include observational or multi-informant data. Third, although the sample was relatively large and diverse across institutional types, it was drawn solely from Taiwan, limiting generalizability to other cultural or educational contexts. Additionally, normative commitment was not a significant predictor in this study, raising questions about its role in early childhood settings that merit further exploration.

Future research should build on these findings by investigating how leadership practices, professional development opportunities, and organizational climate can strengthen both commitment and mission among teachers. Comparative studies across cultural contexts may also clarify whether the mediating role of mission is universal or context-specific. Furthermore, qualitative research could provide deeper insights into how teachers experience mission and meaning in their daily work. At the practical level, the results highlight the importance of cultivating organizational environments that not only foster commitment but also explicitly nurture teachers' sense of mission, thereby promoting sustainable wellness and retention in the early childhood education workforce.

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