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An Empirical Study on the High-Quality Development of Rural Inclusive Kindergartens in Liangshan Yi District, Sichuan: a Mediation Model

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Abstract:
Promoting the high-quality development of preschool education in Liangshan Yi District is the key to realizing the overall high-quality development of preschool education nationwide. This study explored the relationship between resource inputs, child safety environment, and improvement of the quality of teaching and learning in the high-quality development of rural inclusive kindergartens in the Liangshan Yi region of Sichuan Province by exploring the literature and proposing research hypotheses, constructing a measurement model using SPSS 24.0 and SMART-PLS 4.0 data analysis software, and testing the model and its operation mechanism by conducting field research on rural inclusive kindergartens in Xichang City and Puge County, Sichuan Province. The model and its operation mechanism were tested by conducting field research on rural inclusive kindergartens in Xichang and Puge County, Sichuan Province, and effective suggestions were made accordingly.

Keywords:
Yi district education, inclusive kindergartens, quality development, mediation model

1. Introduction

The positive effects of high-quality early childhood education on the development of children, families, communities, and society as a whole are universally recognized around the world [1]. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the cause of preschool education in China has ushered in a new era, and preschool education has also ushered in the new challenges and opportunities brought about by high-quality development, so how to promote the overall high-quality development of preschool education across the country and realize the principle of "never letting an ethnic minority or a region fall behind, and promoting comprehensive national education"? How to promote the overall high-quality development of preschool education across the country and fulfill the solemn promise of "never letting a minority or a region fall behind and promoting the comprehensive development of national education" [2], is a topic of the times that needs to be cracked urgently in the field of preschool education in China , as the main battlefield of poverty alleviation and rural revitalization - Liangshan Yi District due to the superimposed impact of various factors, the overall level of education at all levels and types of education is relatively lagging behind the central and eastern regions Promoting the high-quality development of preschool education in Liangshan Yi District is the key to achieving

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the overall high-quality development of preschool education in the country.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, under the strong leadership of the Party and the sustained efforts of governments at all levels and all walks of life, a series of policies and measures to promote the development of preschool education have been adopted for the Liangshan Yi region and other ethnic, rural and old revolutionary areas. 2014, Sichuan Province launched the "Action Plan for the Revitalization of Education in the Large and Small Liangshan Yi Regions", and opened the "One Village, One Child" preschool program. In 2014, Sichuan Province launched the "Action Plan for the Revitalization of Education in the Liangshan Yi Region" and started the "One Village, One Young Child" preschool teaching point. With the opening of newly built rural kindergartens one after another, the Liangshan Yi Region has put an end to the history of the absence of kindergartens in the rural areas in the diaspora [3].In August 2015, the State Council issued the Decision on Accelerating the Development of Ethnic Education to launch a three-year action plan to focus on supporting the implementation of preschool education in ethnic areas, establishing the goal of reaching 80% of the gross preschool enrollment rate in two years and 70% in three years in ethnic areas by 2020. in May 2018, the former State Council Office of Poverty Alleviation, the Ministry of Education, and Sichuan Province jointly launched the "Preschool Learning for All" initiative in the Liangshan Yi region. In May 2018, the former Poverty Alleviation Office of the State Council, the Ministry of Education, and Sichuan Province jointly launched the "Preschool Learning Putonghua" action in the Liangshan area, with 531,000 Yi children benefiting as of 2022, and in the same year, the Sichuan Provincial Department of Education launched a new round of the "Ethnic Areas 'Preschool Learning Putonghua 2.0' Action". ", the fall of that year is about to let the province's 51 counties (cities, districts) and Leshan City, Jinkouhe District, to achieve the province's ethnic areas, "pre-school learn Mandarin" full coverage [4]. February 2019 The CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued China Education Modernization 2035, which explicitly proposes to "improve the quality standards of preschool education care and teaching," "promote the enhancement of the popularization level of preschool education with a focus on rural areas," and "enhance the ethnic education In October 2022, the report of the 20th Party Congress once again made it clear: "accelerate the construction of a high-quality education system, and provide education to the satisfaction of the people", and "continue to make efforts to provide education for the young and educated". A series of policies and measures have been introduced one after another, providing policy guidelines for the high-quality development of rural inclusive kindergartens in Liangshan Yi area.

As one of the research points in the Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Puge County in its "14th Five-Year Plan" to promote the universal and inclusive development of preschool education as an important task and put forward a series of initiatives, but the group found that the field research, the region still exists in the urban and rural layout of preschool education resources, the development of balanced degree of early childhood equipment and facilities configuration, The quality process monitoring of preschool education, counselors and early childhood teachers, and other aspects to be improved, affecting the high-quality development of preschool education in the region, this study takes this reality as a logical starting point, and tries to carry out specific research.

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2. Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

2.1 Impact of resource inputs on the improvement of the quality of preschool education

The traditional definition commonly divides preschool quality into two categories: structural quality and process quality. The former focuses on resource inputs and outputs related to teacher characteristics (teaching experience, educational attainment), classroom characteristics (student-teacher ratio, class size), and center characteristics (teacher salaries, staff stability, physical facilities); the latter focuses on the processes associated with children's daily interactions as they dynamically interact with teachers, peers, and the physical environment. Resources, on the other hand, are the foundational key elements that contribute to the survival and development of an organization, and the study by Wu Guiling et al. concluded that school organizational resources are the sum of physical, human, and financial educational resources necessary for the effective operation of its educational and teaching activities [5]. Focusing on kindergarten resource input and kindergarten education quality improvement, most of the studies are based on the perspective of educational production and adopt the "input-output" model to examine the relationship between economic resource input, teacher background characteristics and student achievement[6]. to explain the mechanism of positive influence of school organizational resources on school performance [7]. The study by Qin Zhuangcai et al. shows that investing educational resources in disadvantaged areas and groups can help to improve the quality of kindergarten preservation and supplement and strengthen the development of preschool education in disadvantaged areas [8]. Among them, elements such as salary and financial investment are considered to be the most important resource inputs, and the study by Kaiyue Wang et al. also confirmed that the salary of kindergarten teachers has a significant positive impact on the quality of classroom education [9], Ma Yifei believes that although the state has increased the funding for rural preschool education, its percentage is still low in the cost-sharing of funding in this field and faces problems such as insufficient funding for running schools [10], Slot et al. found that salary is a significant predictor of program quality, whereas in other studies it has not shown a negative effect or no effect, and that higher teacher salaries can attract high-quality teachers, improve the stability of teaching positions and fulfill positive professional commitments, which in turn improves the school education Teaching quality [11]. There is a significant correlation between financial investment in the preschool sector and staff-related costs, and quality of kindergarten care, while the reality is that lower pay is a common problem in preschool education worldwide through OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) surveys [12].The above study shows that government financial investment, salary and other resource inputs adequate Chengdu is an important factor that affects the quality of kindergarten care and education. Accordingly, the hypothesis proposed in this study, H1: kindergarten resource input positively affects kindergarten education quality improvement.

2.2 Impact of resource input on children's safety environment

Kindergarten resource inputs mainly include human, financial and material resources, and the overall input of the above resources affects the creation of a safe environment for children in kindergarten to a sufficient degree, and this view has been widely recognized.In November 2018, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on the deepening of reforms and standardization of the development of pre-school education of a number of opinions pointed out that: from the implementation of pre-school education special, stan-

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dardize the community supporting, the use of unused resources, and encourage social [13]. However, the adequacy of resource investment in creating a safe environment for children in kindergartens is not as good as it should be, and a survey of environmental hygiene in rural schools in Guiyang City by Chen Lulu et al. showed that aspects such as hygiene habit promotion and education still need to be strengthened [14]. Tian Xuejie et al. investigated the sanitary environment of 35 kindergartens in Zibo City and found that the problems of insufficient natural lighting in the classroom, small classroom area, and the use of tables and chairs of the same height in more than 54.3% of the kindergartens with large, medium, and small classes are more prominent[15] . Hu Caiyun's research on kindergartens in Tangshan shows that due to the lack of targeted governmental investment in education, there are obvious urban-rural differences in the quality of kindergarten's educational environment, and that rural kindergartens fail to meet the environmental quality standards in terms of basic physical conditions, play materials, and preservation and teaching activities[16]. The research of Ding Jinxia et al. shows that the inadequate or lack of investment in kindergarten site selection, garden building design, facilities and equipments leads to the prominent safety hidden danger of the environment where children are located [17]. At the same time, most of the national rural inclusive kindergartens are located in the minority areas, due to a variety of cultural exchanges and interactions, multicultural background of children's mental health, cultural security and other non-traditional security environment is not to be ignored, Shen Fang on the different nature of the kindergarten environment in the ethnic areas of the study showed that, compared with the private parks, the public parks are more conducive to the development of the mental health of preschool children of mobility, psychological security environment . The first is to create a safe and secure psychological environment for the children, and the second is to create a safe and secure environment for the children[18]. Regarding the creation of a culturally safe environment, although high-quality preschool education requires a number of widely recognized principles, the understanding of key concepts and expected characteristics of performance indicators still varies considerably across socio-cultures and is inextricably linked to the cultural soil in which they are embedded [19]. Quality is recognized as a term full of values, social and cultural constructs embedded in history and culture.Thus, a high-quality cultural safety environment in kindergarten needs to be based on the regional multicultural vision. In recent years, kindergartens, in order to catch up with the "trend of educational development", have neglected the local cultural ecology and lacked confidence in the excellent traditional Chinese culture, which is composed of multi-ethnicity, and the sense of cultural identity is on the low side[20], in the long run, it is bound to have a negative impact on the creation of a non-traditional security environment based on local culture. Zhang Fengli believes that the curriculum reform and resource supply should be strengthened to build a "big ideology and politics" parenting pattern under the curriculum ideology and politics parenting system [21]. The above study illustrates that insufficient investment of resources in environmental health, governmental education funding, kindergarten location, building design, facilities and equipment, psychological safety and cultural safety will not be conducive to the creation of traditional/non-traditional safe environment for children. Accordingly, this study proposes the hypothesis H2: kindergarten resource input positively affects its child safety environment creation.

2.3 Impact of a safe environment for children on the improvement of the quality of preservation and education

Safety, quality, universality and universality as the value orientation of the high-quality development of inclusive kindergartens in ethnic rural areas, safety is placed in the first place, the reason for this, the World

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Health Organization (WHO) in 2010 published a survey report that among children of different age groups, preschool children are most vulnerable to injury, and injuries are the main cause of child mortality. Among them, the teacher community is considered to play an important role in the process of recognizing, reporting and preventing child abuse [22], high-quality preschool education needs to be guaranteed by the provision of an environment that supports children's health and safety. However, a study of kindergarten teachers in Yanji City, Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, by Cui Wenxiang et al. revealed that only 67% of the teachers had a correct understanding of unintentional injuries to young children and did not pay much attention to injury prevention in their daily lives [23]. In addition, rural kindergartens often lack outdoor equipment and protective gear for young children, and teachers' perception scores of safe environments are generally low; therefore, teachers are reluctant to organize outdoor play for children for safety reasons. This situation inevitably limits children's learning and subsequent development, which in turn affects the quality of care and education. In addition to traditional safety categories such as injury and death, children's mental health and the creation of safe environments for indigenous cultures have begun to attract the attention of scholars, and cultural safety is a matter of the survival and security of the nation [24], Chen Yiting's research points out that kindergarten curriculum content selection, multicultural education, language education and other aspects should pay attention to cultural safety [25], the culturally safe environment of kindergartens and the cultural self-awareness of teachers determine the direction of the connotative development of preschool education. Guo Tiecheng et al. believe that creating an environment conducive to children's psychological safety from teacher-sourced psychological harm and offering mental health education activity courses is an important way of kindergarten mental health education [26]. The above study illustrates that kindergartens provide a safe environment for children's injuries, deaths, cultural safety, psychological safety, and other specific elements that influence the organization of kindergarten activities, curriculum development, teacher professional development, and other improvements in the quality of education and care. Accordingly, the hypothesis proposed in this study, H3: The creation of safe environment for children in kindergartens positively affects the improvement of the quality of kindergarten education.

Combining the literature exploration and field research, the research hypothesis framework is proposed, and the causal model of the high-quality development of inclusive kindergartens in ethnic rural areas, which consists of resource inputs (TR), the creation of a safe environment for children (AQ), and the enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning (ZL), is established through the technique of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Partial Least Squares (PLS), and the intrinsic mechanism of the role of the kindergartens is further explored (Figure 1).

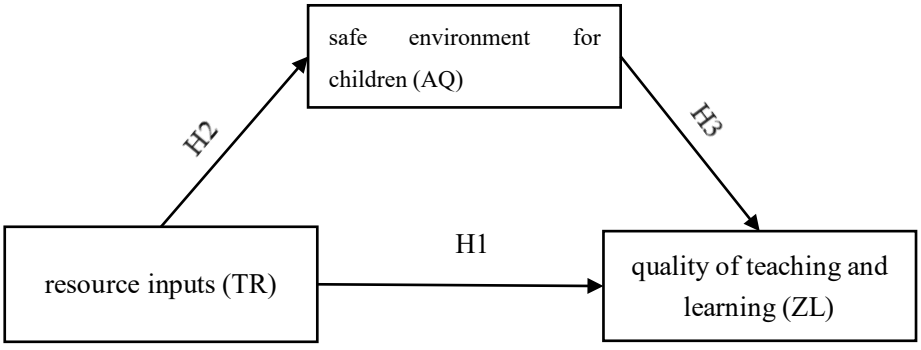


Figure 1. Research hypothesis framework.

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3.Materials and Methods

3.1 Study population

In this study, a total of 700 questionnaires were sent out to kindergarten principals, full-time teachers, caregivers, and other employees of kindergartens in the rural areas of Xichang City and Puge County, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, during the period of February-March, 2023, and 642 valid questionnaires were retrieved, with an effective rate of recovery of 91.7% by excluding the questionnaires with a shorter response time, choosing the same question in the whole selection, and the questionnaires with contradictory logic of the choices.

3.2 Research tools

3.2.1 Questionnaire design

Based on the actual development of preschool education in ethnic rural areas and with reference to relevant literature, this study used the Likert five-point scale to prepare the initial questionnaire "Questionnaire on the High-Quality Development of Rural Inclusive Kindergartens in Liangshan Yi District of Sichuan Province" and used the Delphi method to invite experts in preschool education and the backbone of the staff of the ethnic rural inclusive kindergartens to review and revise the questionnaire, as well as to check the reliability and validity of the formal questionnaire and other indexes. The formal questionnaire was tested and finally formed. The main body of the formal questionnaire is divided into 3 dimensions, with a total of 23 topics, including 11 topics on resource input, 5 topics on safe environment for children, and 7 topics on improvement of the quality of preservation and teaching.

3.2.2 Reliability and validity test

In this study, the statistical data of Cronbach's α, CR, and AVE were used to test the reliability and validity of the measurement model (Table 1). The Cronbach's α of the three dimensions were all in the range of 0.934-0.967 (test standard ≧ 0.7), the AVE of the three items were all in the range of 0.705-0.884 (test standard □ 0.5), and the CR of the composite reliability of the three items were all in the range of 0.958-0.972 (test standard ≧ 0.7), indicating that the measurement model has sufficient reliability and validity.

Table 1. Statistics on reliability and range of loading values.

Reflective items	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	Loading
Security Environment	0.934	0.958	0.884	0.906-0.973
Resource Input	0.958	0.963	0.705	0.756-0.902
Quality of Education	0.967	0.972	0.834	0.846-0.918

3.2.3 Convergent validity test

According to Garver (et al.), if the loading of each item on its corresponding construct exceeds 0.70, the measurement model has good convergent validity. A validated factor analysis (CFA) using Structural Equa-

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tion Modeling (SEM) Partial Least Squares (PLS) technique in this study revealed (Table 1) that: the loadings for Children's Traditional Environment (AQ) ranged from 0.906-0.973, Resource Inputs (TR) from 0.765-0.902, and Enhancement of the Quality of Child Care and Education (ZL) from 0.846-0.918, indicating that the model has good convergent validity. 0.918 ranging, indicating that the loadings of the corresponding factors of the three items were higher than the recommended thresholds. It further indicates that all factor loadings of the measurement items on their corresponding constructs meet the requirements, suggesting that they have sufficient convergent validity.

3.2.4 Tests of Distinctive Validity

In order to establish discriminant validity, it is necessary to measure that the items in the model should load higher on their respective constructs than on the remaining constructs. As shown in Table 2, all items loaded higher on their own constructs than they cross loaded on the other constructs, supporting the discriminant validity of all factors.

Table 2. Discriminant validity analysis (HTHT).

items	Security Environment	Resource Input	Quality of Education
Security Environment	（0.89）	0.816	0.859
Resource Input	0.81	（0.816）	
Quality of Education	0.89	0.811	（0.859）

3.3 Data processing

This study utilized SPSS 23.0 and Smart- PLS 4.0 software for data processing. SPSS 23.0 software was used for descriptive statistics and correlation analysis; Smart- PLS 4.0 software was used to analyze the model's reliability, validity, loading factors, discriminant validity, and the mediating effect of child safety environment as a mediating variable.

4.Findings

4.1 Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

4.1.1 Descriptive statistics

The specific scores of the three dimensions of high quality development of kindergartens in ethnic rural areas, namely, safety environment, resource input, and quality of teaching and learning, show that the evaluation score of the safety environment aspect is the highest (4.02 ± 0.76), followed by quality of teaching and learning (3.94 ± 0.76), respectively, and the lowest score of low score is the input of resources (3.71 ± 0.79) (Table 2). Specifically:

(1) Analysis of differences in the status of the security environment. It includes both non-traditional safe environment (4.03 ± 0.79) and traditional safe environment (4.01 ± 0.77). At the same time, there were signif-

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icant differences in children's safe environment creation in different ages (F<3,638>=4.07, p<0.01), different teaching ages (F<4,637>=3.64, p<0.01), and different nature of workplace (F<2,639>=4.65, p<0.05). Post hoc LSD comparisons revealed that faculty members aged 30-40 years (4.18 ± 0.68) scored significantly higher than faculty members aged 20-30 years (3.95 ± 0.77), and faculty members aged 50 years or older scored higher (4.34 ± 0.65) than faculty members aged 40-50 years (4.12 ± 0.8), 30-40 years (4.18 ± 0.68), 20-30 years (3.95 ± 0.77); staff with 5-10 years of teaching experience (3.91 ± 0.73) all scored significantly lower than staff with less than 5 years of teaching experience (4.05 ± 0.78), 10-15 years of teaching experience (4.22 ± 0.72), and 20 years of teaching experience or more (4.22 ± 0.75); and staff who worked in public gardens (4.04 ± 0.749) scored significantly higher than staff who worked in universal private gardens (3.57 ± 0.91) and other private gardens (3.74 ± 0.79);

(2) Differential analysis of resource input status. It includes the resource input of human (3.79 ± 0.81), financial (3.64 ± 0.94), and material (3.72 ± 0.82) resources. Meanwhile, resource inputs were significantly different among faculty members of different teaching ages (F<4,637>=2.58, p<0.01). Post hoc LSD comparisons showed that the scores of employees with 5-10 years of teaching experience (3.59 ± 0.71) were all significantly lower than the scores of faculty with less than 5 years of teaching experience (3.77 ± 0.8) and 10-15 years of teaching experience (3.93 ± 0.87), and the scores of those with 15-20 years of teaching experience (3.4 ± 0.75) were all significantly lower than the scores of faculty with 10-15 years of teaching experience, 20 years of teaching experience, and more than 20 years of teaching experience (3.87 ± 0.82) employees; working in public gardens (3.74 ± 0.78) scored significantly higher than working in other private gardens (3.4 ± 0.54);

(3) Analysis of differences in quality of care status. It includes two aspects of school readiness (outcome quality) (3.95 ± 0.74), and the quality of preservation and teaching (process quality) (3.92 ± 0.79). At the same time, there were significant differences in the quality of preservation by gender (t<640>=2.12, P<0.05) and by teaching age (F<4,637>=2.61, p<0.05). The comparison showed that male faculty members scored significantly higher (4.1 ± 0.75) than females (3.92 ± 0.73), while those with 5-10 years of teaching experience (3.85 ± 0.72) had significantly lower scores than faculty members with less than 5 years of teaching experience (4.01 ± 0.74), and 10-15 years of teaching experience (4.11 ± 0.71).

4.1.2 Correlation analysis

Further correlation analysis of different dimensions shows that (Table 3), there is a significant positive correlation between the quality of teaching and learning of inclusive kindergartens in ethnic rural areas and the creation of a safe environment (p<0.01) and the input of resources (p<0.01), indicating that the more various types of resources are invested in the development of inclusive kindergartens, the safer the environment is for the growth of children, and the better the quality of teaching and learning is. In addition, there is also a significant positive correlation between resource investment and safe environment creation (p<0.05), indicating that the more resources are invested at all levels of government, the safer the environment is for children to grow up in inclusive kindergartens.

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Table 3. Descriptive analysis and correlation matrix statistics.

items	M ± SD	resource input	security environment	quality of education
resource input	3.71 ± 0.79	1		
security environment	4.02 ± 0.76	0.769*	1	
quality of education	3.94 ± 0.76	0.78**	0.888**	1

(*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001)

4.2 Analysis of the mediating role of the security environment

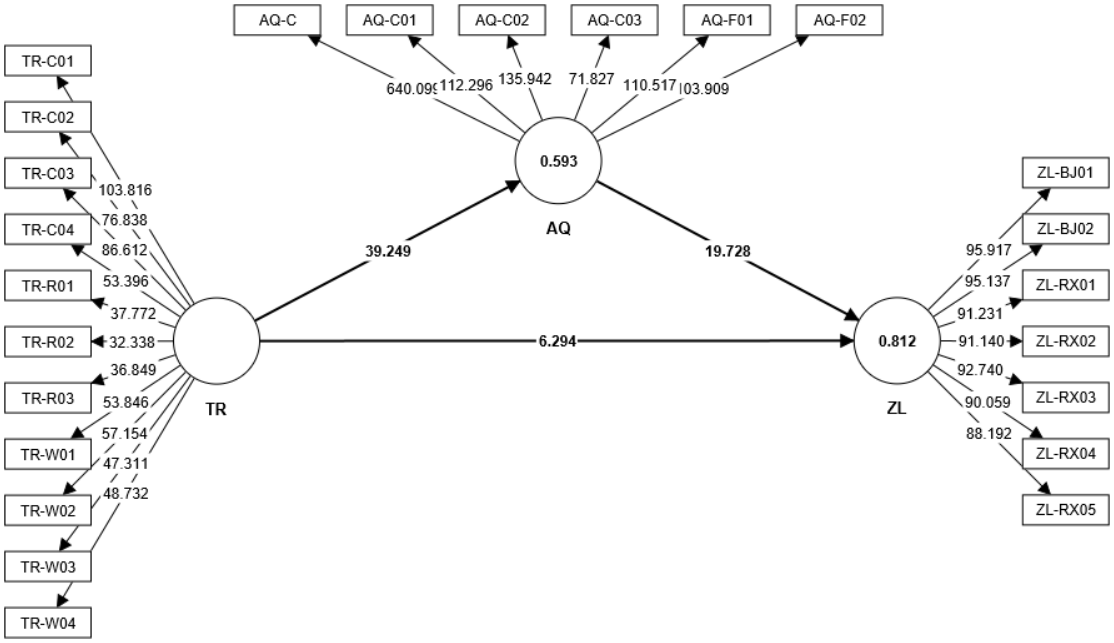


Figure 2. Intermediary model.

The structural measurement model of high-quality development of inclusive kindergartens in ethnic areas was supported by the previous indicator tests (Figure 2). Since the PLS model does not generate model fit statistics, r2 values (explained variance) were used in specific dependency constructs to assess the explanatory power of a structural model. In this case, the safe environment explained 61% of the variance in resource inputs, and quality of care explained 86% of the variance in the safe environment. The PLS results supported all of the research hypotheses regarding the impact of the safe environment, and as expected, the safe environment had a positive impact on resource inputs and quality of care.

In this study, the PLS results were further analyzed to determine the mediating effect of security environment. First, the path coefficients of each dimension indicator were tested for significance, and the p-values of each path coefficient were significant at the 0.001 level; after that, based on the standardized recommended values (no mediating effect if VAF<30%, partial mediating benefit if 20% ≦ VAF ≦ 80%, and full mediating effect if VAF>80%), the total and mediating effects were calculated (Table 4), and the mediating effect value is 80%, indicating that child safety environment plays a partially mediating role between resource inputs and quality of preservation.

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Table 4. Analysis of direct and mediated effects.

items	Original sample(O)	Sample mean(M)	STDEV	t-value	p-value
security environment -> quality of education	0.803	0.803	0.031	25.973	<0.001
resource input -> security environment	0.781	0.782	0.019	41.311	<0.001
resource input -> quality of education	0.153	0.153	0.034	4.55	<0.001
resource input -> security environment -> quality of education	0.627	0.628	0.029	21.758	<0.001

5.Discussion and conclusions

The kindergarten staff's score for the quality of teaching and learning in rural inclusive kindergartens in Liangshan Yi District was 3.94 ± 0.74, which was at the above average level, and was significantly different between different genders (F<1,641>=4.154, P<0.05), teaching ages (F<4,637>=2.42, p<0.05), and kindergartens of different natures (F<2,641>=0.601, p< 0.05) were significantly different from each other. The conclusion that public kindergartens can promote students' mental health and improve the quality of education is consistent with the findings of Shen Fang's study. Accordingly, this study suggests that targeted training and guidance should be carried out in Liangshan Yi District, Sichuan Province, based on different genders and teaching ages of staff and kindergartens of different natures, so as to improve the quality of childcare and education in rural inclusive kindergartens in Liangshan Yi District.

The test reliability, validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the measurement model of the high-quality development of rural inclusive kindergartens in Liangshan Yi District, which was constructed by the dimensions of safe environment for children (AQ), resource investment (TR), and improvement of teaching quality (ZL), met the standards, and verified that the model of the structural model of the high-quality development of rural inclusive kindergartens in Yangshan Yi District was validated. . Accordingly, this study suggests that the cultural safety environment of children in inclusive kindergartens in rural Liangshan Yi area should be strengthened, especially the creation of non-traditional cultural safety environments, such as psychological safety and cultural safety, and the investment of human, financial, and material resources and the effectiveness of their distribution should be continuously strengthened, so as to promote the high-quality development of inclusive kindergartens in rural Liangshan Yi area.

Child safety environment creation is a mediating variable in the high-quality structural model of rural inclusive kindergartens in Liangshan Yi District, and child safety environment creation plays a partial mediating role between resource inputs and the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning, with a mediating effect size of 80%. This study suggests that the high-quality development of rural inclusive kindergartens in the Liangshan Yi region of Sichuan should always focus on the basic value orientation of safe, high-quality, universal and inclusive kindergartens, and give full play to the intermediary role of the creation of a safe kindergarten environment in the promotion of resource inputs and improvement of the quality of teaching and learning, in order to promote high-quality pre-school education for the general benefit of compatriots in more Yi regions.

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