

Relationship Between Interest in Teaching Profession and Psychological Well-Being of School Teachers

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Abstract—The present study explores the relationship between teachers' professional interest and their psychological well-being (PWB) using Holland's Self-Directed Search (SDS) and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale. A sample of 100 private school teachers (50 male, 50 female) aged 25–30 participated in the study. Correlational analysis revealed a strong positive relationship ($r = .81, p < .01$) between professional interest and overall PWB, with component correlations ranging from .95 to .99. An independent samples t-test showed no significant gender differences in professional interest ($t = -0.744, p = .228, \text{Cohen's } d = .11$). These findings highlight the importance of fostering intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and workplace support to enhance teacher well-being and job satisfaction. The study's limitations include its focus on private urban schools and self-reported measures. Future research should explore longitudinal effects, intervention-based strategies, and comparative studies across different educational settings.

Keywords: interest, psychological well-being (PWB), Holland's Self-Directed Search (SDS), Correlational analysis, intrinsic motivation

I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a profession that demands not only intellectual capabilities but also emotional resilience, passion, and a deep sense of commitment. Teachers are essential in influencing students' futures and improving the quality of education. However, a teacher's motivation, job satisfaction, and general psychological well-being (PWB) can all be strongly impacted by how interested they are in their work. According to Carol Ryff's (1989) conceptualization, psychological well-being encompasses a variety of elements, such as "autonomy, self-acceptance, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth". These factors influence a person's general happiness and mental health. Given that teachers spend a considerable amount of time in their profession, their level of interest in teaching can directly influence their mental and emotional states, ultimately affecting their performance and the quality of education they provide.

Interest in one's profession plays a pivotal role in shaping motivation, engagement, and resilience. Holland's Self-Directed Search (SDS) theory provides a framework for understanding vocational interests, emphasizing that individuals who align their careers with their intrinsic interests tend to experience greater job satisfaction, career stability, and psychological well-being. Teachers who are genuinely passionate about their profession often find joy and meaning in their work, leading to enhanced creativity, enthusiasm, and emotional stability. This, in turn, creates a positive learning environment for students. Conversely, teachers who lack interest in their profession may experience job dissatisfaction, increased stress, and burnout, which can negatively impact their psychological well-being and professional effectiveness (García-Álvarez D. et al., 2021).

A study by Deci and Ryan (2000) on Self-Determination Theory emphasizes that intrinsic motivation, which is closely linked to interest in one's profession, significantly contributes to job satisfaction and overall well-being. Teachers who find intrinsic joy in their profession are more likely to experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness—three essential psychological needs that enhance well-being.

The multifaceted aspect of psychological well-being was further explained by Ryff and Keyes (1995), who emphasized that people who are highly engaged in their work typically score higher on measures of self-acceptance, personal development, and life purpose. According to their findings, people are more likely to feel psychologically resilient and fulfilled when they work in a job that reflects their interests.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018) conducted another pertinent study that examined the connection between well-being, work satisfaction, and teacher motivation. Their findings supported the notion that professional interest is essential to psychological

well-being by showing that instructors who found personal significance and engagement in their work reported lower stress levels and higher job satisfaction.

The correlation between professional interest and psychological well-being is particularly significant in the context of school teachers, especially those teaching at the secondary level in private urban schools. These educators often face high expectations, demanding workloads, and constant pressure to meet educational standards. A deeper understanding of how a teacher's level of interest in their profession correlates with their psychological well-being can provide valuable insights for school administrators, policymakers, and teacher training programs. If a strong correlation exists, it would underscore the importance of fostering interest in teaching through targeted interventions, training programs, and institutional support mechanisms.

II. PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND ITS COMPONENTS

Psychological well-being (PWB) is a multifaceted construct that goes beyond the absence of mental illness and focuses on an individual's overall functioning and life satisfaction. Carol Ryff's model identifies following six key components that contribute to an individual's mental and emotional health (Ryff, 1989):

- **Autonomy** – The ability to make independent decisions and regulate one's behavior based on personal beliefs and values rather than societal pressures. Teachers with high autonomy feel confident in their teaching styles and decision-making processes, which enhances their job satisfaction.
- **Personal Growth** – The capacity for self-improvement, development, and realizing one's potential. Teachers who experience personal growth continuously seek new knowledge and skills, making their profession more engaging and fulfilling.
- **Environmental Mastery** – The ability to effectively manage one's surroundings and make use of available resources. Teachers with high environmental mastery can adapt to different classroom challenges and create a structured learning environment for their students.
- **Positive Relations with Others** – The ability to form meaningful and supportive relationships. Teachers who have strong relationships with colleagues, students, and administrators tend to experience higher job satisfaction and reduced stress levels.
- **Purpose in Life** – A sense of meaning and direction in one's life. Teachers who perceive their work as meaningful are more likely to remain motivated and passionate about their profession, leading to higher psychological well-being.
- **Self-Acceptance** – A positive evaluation of oneself, including acceptance of personal strengths and weaknesses. Teachers with high self-acceptance have greater confidence in their abilities, reducing feelings of burnout and dissatisfaction.

III. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTEREST IN PROFESSION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

The level of interest a teacher has in their profession is a critical factor influencing their psychological well-being. Research suggests that individuals who pursue careers aligned with their interests and passions experience higher levels of satisfaction, motivation, and well-being. In the teaching profession, interest in one's work enhances engagement, creativity, and resilience, which are essential for effective teaching and job fulfilment (Zhou et al., 2024).

Teachers who are genuinely passionate about their profession tend to experience greater job satisfaction, emotional stability, and motivation to continuously improve their skills. Their enthusiasm fosters a positive and dynamic learning environment, benefiting both teachers and students. Moreover, a strong interest in teaching helps educators navigate challenges and stressors, thereby reducing burnout and enhancing their overall psychological well-being.

Conversely, teachers who lack interest in their profession may struggle with low motivation, job dissatisfaction, and increased stress. They may find it challenging to engage with students, manage classroom dynamics, and derive meaning from their work, leading to a decline in psychological well-being. This dissatisfaction can negatively impact their autonomy, sense of purpose, and ability to form positive relationships with students and colleagues (Thakur et al., 2022).

Holland's Self-Directed Search (SDS) theory highlights that vocational interests play a significant role in determining career satisfaction and overall well-being. When individuals engage in work that aligns with their interests, they experience a sense of fulfilment and meaning, which directly contributes to their psychological well-being. In the teaching profession, fostering interest and passion through professional development programs, mentorship, and supportive work environments can lead to improved job satisfaction and mental health outcomes (Bidi et al., 2024).

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IV. RESEARCH PROBLEMS

- What is the relationship between interest in teaching profession and psychological well-being of school teachers?
- What is the difference in interest levels in teaching profession between male and female teachers?

V. OBJECTIVES

- To study the relationship between interest in teaching profession and psychological well-being of school teachers.
- To examine whether male and female teachers' interest in the teaching profession differs by gender.

VI. HYPOTHESES

- There would be a positive relationship between interest in teaching profession and psychological well-being of school teachers.
- There would be no significant differences in interest in teaching profession between male and female teachers.

VII. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF VARIABLES

- **Interest in teaching profession:** John L. Holland's Self-Directed Search (SDS) states that "interest in the teaching profession refers to the extent to which individuals choose and identify with a teaching vocation". In this study, a high score on the SDS Social Code indicates a strong interest in the teaching profession.
- **Psychological Well-Being:** Positive components of an individual's functioning are embodied by the multifaceted idea of psychological well-being. It is related to the participants' ratings on the following categories, as per Ryff's PWB Scale- "self-acceptance, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, personal growth, autonomy, and purpose in life".

VIII. RESEARCH DESIGN

Using the correlational design, the present study looks at the relationship between teachers' PWB and their interest in becoming teachers.

IX. SAMPLE

100 school teachers became part of the present research work. The subjects fall within the age range of 25–30 years. There were 50 male and 50 female participants. Teachers working for private schools that use English as their primary language of teaching made up the study's sample.

X. PSYCHOLOGICAL MEASURES

Following psychological measures were used in the current study:

- **Socio-Demographic Information Questionnaire (Self Developed)**

To gather data essential to the current investigation, a socio-demographic questionnaire was self-developed. Age, gender, education, subject taught, socioeconomic status, years of experience, and other details were covered. The consent form was also supplied so that participants could attest to their voluntary participation in the present study.

- **Psychological Well-being Scale (PWB) (Ryff, 2007)**

The PWB Scale, developed by Carol D. Ryff in 2007 (adapted from Ryff, 1989), assesses six components of well-being—“self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, personal growth, autonomy, and environmental mastery”. 42 self-report items make up the test, which is scored on a Likert scale of 6-point which ranges from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Twenty-one out of the forty-two questions are negatively keyed, and the items are categorized into the six dimensions. There is the possibility of minimum 42 and maximum 252 score. The six subscales have acceptable test-retest reliability (ranging from .81 to .88) and internal consistency (α range from .86 to .93) (Ryff, 1989a). The scale is applicable to adults of all ages and is widely used in clinical, research, and community-based programs.

- **Self-Directed Search (SDS) (Holland & Messer, 2013)**

The subjects' Holland's type was ascertained using the Self-Directed Search (SDS; Holland & Messer, 2013). “Activities, Competencies and Occupations, and Self-Estimates of Skills and Abilities” are the four components that make up this measure. Holland's six types include “Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional”. The three sections of Activities, Competencies, and Occupations contain 252 items, with 14 items in each of the RIASEC components. Ability (Part I) and Skills (Part II), the final element of Self Estimates, each consist of six items (one for each component) that must be scored on a Likert scale of 7-point.

Overall, the possibility of score ranges from 0 (if the participant leaves all the boxes unticked) to 56 (if all the boxes of a particular component are ticked in first 3 sections and rated 7 in both the parts of the last section) for each component of RIASEC. The SDS has good psychometric properties, with overall total type scores ranging from 0.88 to 0.93 and internal consistency coefficients for the scales ranging from 0.71 to 0.93. According to Holland and Messer (2013), the coefficients of reliability found using test-retest vary from .78 to .98.

Table 1

Correlation between Interest and Psychological Well-Being (components & overall)

Variables	ATN	EM	PG	PR	PiL	SA	PWB
Interest	.99**	.95**	.95**	.98**	.97**	.97**	.81**

Note. N=100. **p<.01. (1-tailed).

Professional interest in teaching and all aspects of PWB. According to Ryff, the six components include- “Autonomy (ATN), Environmental Mastery (EM), Personal Growth (PG), Positive Relations with others (PR), Purpose in Life (PiL), Self-Acceptance (SA)”. As per the findings of the Pearson correlation, shown in Table 1, we can see that interest in teaching profession is very strongly and positively related to these dimensions and overall PWB. The correlation coefficients for these variables range from 0.95 to 0.99, indicating exceptionally high associations between interest and well-being across all dimensions.

These robust associations imply that a major contributor to improving several facets of PWB is professional interest. In particular, teachers' PWB in areas like autonomy, life purpose, and self-acceptance improves dramatically as their enthusiasm in their work grows. This outcome is in accordance with earlier studies that highlight the importance of involvement and intrinsic motivation in fostering psychological well-being.

As per Ryan and Deci (2000), intrinsic motivation—which is strongly related with a person's interest in their activities—contributes to greater levels of well-being, especially in areas like autonomy and personal development. One of the fundamental elements of psychological well-being is autonomy in one's position, which is more likely to be experienced by teachers who are more engaged in their work (Ryff, 1989). Furthermore, greater professional interest can greatly increase one's feeling of purpose in life, which is another essential dimension of well-being (Seligman, 2009).

This outcome aligns with Deci and Ryan's (2008) SDT. It says that because their core psychological needs—"autonomy, competence, and relatedness"—are satisfied; people who are more involved in their work are more likely to have higher psychological well-being on average.

Furthermore, the link between interest and self-acceptance is in agreement with the findings of Diener and colleagues (2009), who stress the importance of self-acceptance and personal fulfillment for general well-being. Because they are more probable to feel competent and involved in their work, teachers who are highly interested in their careers may have better levels of self-acceptance, which in turn can lead to more self-esteem and happiness.

Since people who feel competent and respected are more probable to build meaningful relationships with others, the results further corroborate Renninger (2009) theory that interest and engagement in one's professional role generate positive interpersonal relationships. The strong associations between professional interest and favorable relationships found in the current study are indicative of this.

In conclusion, the strong and noteworthy relationships between interest and PWB imply that encouraging teachers to feel more invested in their work could result in notable enhancements to their well-being. This research emphasizes how crucial it is to plan and carry out initiatives that increase student involvement and enthusiasm for teaching.

H₁: There would be a positive relationship between interest in teaching profession and PWB of school teachers.

With a correlation coefficient of $r = .81$, which shows a strong positive relation between teachers' PWB and their interest in their work, the data in the table 1 and its commentary amply support this hypothesis.

Table 2

Comparison of t-scores of Males and Females as measured by SDS

Gender	Variable	N	Mean	SD	SEM	t	Sig.	Cohen's d
Male	Interest	50	33.33	8.45	.84	-.744	.228	.11
Female		50	34.19	7.87	.79			

Note. $df=98$.

Table 2 presents the gender-based comparison of the Interest variable, with data collected from 50 male and 50 female participants. Males have a mean score of 33.33 (SD = 8.45), whereas females have a little higher mean score of 34.19 (SD = 7.87). This implies that although there is little difference between the two groups, women report a little higher level of curiosity than men. To ascertain if this difference was statistically significant, an independent samples t-test was employed.

Male and female interest levels do not differ statistically significantly, as indicated by the p-value of 0.228 and the t-value of -0.744. The Cohen's d value of 0.11, which denotes a small effect size, supports the conclusion that the observed variation in means is negligible and unlikely to have any practical implications.

Research on gender differences in professional interest has provided mixed results. While some studies suggest that gender influences career interests, particularly in traditionally male or female-dominated professions, others indicate that these differences are diminishing over time.

According to Lippa (2010), interest in certain types of work (e.g., technical versus nurturing) has been linked to gender, but such differences have decreased with changing societal norms and equal opportunities in education and the workforce.

This is in line with the outcomes of the study, which show that the interest scores of male and female teachers do not differ statistically significantly. These results further support the notion that professional interest in teaching is influenced more by individual characteristics and work environment than by gender (Klusmann et al., 2008).

Furthermore, studies have shown that teachers' interest and involvement in their careers, irrespective of gender, are significantly influenced by work-life balance, job satisfaction, and professional support.

According to these results, programs aimed at boosting teachers' professional motivation should concentrate on establishing nurturing, developmentally rich settings where male and female educators are equally appreciated and inspired. The analysis shows a very small impact size and no discernible gender variations in interest levels. In line with earlier research that found

little variation between the sexes in work-related interests, this shows that gender has little bearing on interest in the teaching profession (Lippa, 2005; Trautwein et al., 2006).

It can be inferred that any detected differences are the result of chance rather than systemic gender-based disadvantages because the p-value is significantly higher than the traditional cutoff point of 0.05. These results also raise the possibility that variables other than gender may be more significant predictors of interest levels, including professional engagement, work satisfaction, and chances for professional growth.

Consequently, interventions aimed at enhancing professional interest among teachers can be equally beneficial across genders, and should focus on fostering intrinsic motivation and providing supportive work environments for all educators, regardless of their gender.

H₂: There would be no significant differences between male and female teachers in interest in teaching profession.

It is evident from the t-value of -0.744 and the p-value of 0.228 that there is no statistically significant difference in interest levels between males and females at the .05 level. Therefore, our hypothesis, that there would be no appreciable disparities in male and female teachers' interest in the teaching profession, is validated.

XI. Limitations and future research directions

This study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. The sample was limited to private school teachers in urban areas, which may not fully represent the experiences of teachers in government or rural schools. Additionally, the correlational design prevents establishing causality between professional interest and psychological well-being. Self-reported measures may also introduce biases, as responses could be influenced by social desirability. Future research should explore longitudinal studies to assess changes in teachers' interest and well-being over time, intervention-based studies to test strategies for enhancing engagement, and comparative research across different educational settings to gain a broader understanding of these relationships.

XII. IMPLICATIONS

The study highlights the strong positive correlation between teachers' professional interest and psychological well-being, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions in teacher training, workplace support, and policy development. Schools should foster intrinsic motivation through professional development, mentorship, and autonomy in teaching methods while implementing well-being programs to prevent burnout. Since no significant gender differences were found, such initiatives should be universally applied. Enhancing teacher well-being not only improves job satisfaction but also positively impacts student learning. Future research can explore longitudinal effects, intervention-based approaches, and comparative analyses across different educational settings.

XIII. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that both the hypotheses stand true that there is a positive relationship between interest in teaching profession and PWB of school teachers and there is no significant differences between male and female teachers in interest in teaching profession.

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