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The Susceptibility of Teachers' Job Satisfaction on Teacher Autonomy, Student Behavior, and Participation

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Abstract

Teacher job satisfaction is a critical determinant of instructional quality, teacher retention, and overall school effectiveness. Among the factors influencing teachers' professional well-being, job autonomy, students' classroom behavior, and student participation have received increasing attention, yet their interrelationships remain insufficiently understood. This study examined the direct and indirect effects of teachers' job autonomy, perceived student behavior, and student participation on teachers' job satisfaction. The study employed an applied, descriptive-correlational research design. The statistical population comprised all primary school teachers in Marand County (N = 1,732), from which 274 teachers were selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using standardized questionnaires measuring teachers' job autonomy, perceptions of student participation, perceptions of student behavior, and job satisfaction. The validity of the instruments was confirmed through expert review and confirmatory factor analysis, while reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding 0.70. Data were analyzed using SPSS 26 for descriptive statistics and SmartPLS 3 for partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings demonstrated that teachers' perceptions of positive student behavior and active student participation were positively and significantly associated with job satisfaction. Moreover, teachers' job autonomy exerted a significant indirect effect on job satisfaction through the mediating roles of student behavior and student participation. These findings indicate that providing greater professional autonomy while fostering supportive classroom environments can substantially enhance teachers' occupational satisfaction. The study highlights the importance of simultaneously strengthening teacher autonomy and promoting constructive student engagement as complementary strategies for improving teachers' professional well-being and educational effectiveness.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Teacher job satisfaction is widely recognized as one of the most important indicators of educational quality and organizational effectiveness in schools. Satisfied teachers demonstrate greater professional commitment, instructional effectiveness, motivation, and willingness to remain in the teaching profession. Conversely, low job satisfaction has been associated with teacher burnout, absenteeism, reduced instructional quality, and increased turnover. Previous research has shown that teachers' job satisfaction is influenced by both organizational and classroom-related factors. Among organizational variables, job autonomy enables teachers to exercise professional judgment, make instructional decisions independently, and adapt teaching practices to students' needs. Classroom factors, particularly students' behavior and active participation in learning activities, also contribute significantly to teachers' professional experiences. Positive student behavior facilitates classroom management, while active participation enhances instructional interactions and creates more rewarding teaching experiences. Although these variables have frequently been investigated separately, relatively few studies have examined their simultaneous relationships within an integrated structural model. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the direct and indirect relationships among teachers' job autonomy, perceived student behavior, student participation, and teachers' job satisfaction.

Method

This study employed an applied quantitative research design using a descriptive-correlational approach. The statistical population consisted of all primary school teachers in Marand County, totaling 1,732 teachers. Using convenience sampling, 274 teachers were selected to participate in the study. Data were collected using four standardized instruments measuring teachers' job autonomy, perceptions of student participation, perceptions of student behavior, and job satisfaction. Face and content validity were confirmed through expert review, while construct validity was examined using confirmatory factor analysis. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, all of which exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70. Descriptive analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26. The hypothesized structural relationships among the variables were examined using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS version 3. This analytical approach enabled the simultaneous estimation of both direct and indirect relationships among the study variables.

Results

The structural model demonstrated satisfactory measurement and structural validity. The findings revealed that teachers' perceptions of positive student behavior were significantly associated with higher levels of job satisfaction. Similarly, greater student participation in classroom learning activities was found to positively predict teachers' job satisfaction, suggesting that active learner engagement contributes to more satisfying professional experiences for teachers. The analysis further indicated that teachers' job autonomy did not merely influence job satisfaction directly; rather, it exerted a significant indirect effect through teachers' perceptions of student behavior and student participation. In other words, greater professional autonomy appears to create instructional conditions that foster more constructive classroom interactions and greater student engagement, which subsequently enhance teachers' professional satisfaction. Overall, the

results support a structural model in which organizational and classroom-related variables operate together to influence teachers' occupational well-being. The findings emphasize that job satisfaction is shaped not only by institutional working conditions but also by the quality of daily classroom experiences.

Discussion and Conclusion The findings highlight the multidimensional nature of teachers' job satisfaction by demonstrating that organizational and instructional factors jointly influence teachers' professional well-being. Job autonomy provides teachers with opportunities to exercise professional discretion, adapt instructional practices, and respond effectively to students' learning needs. These conditions may foster more positive classroom environments characterized by constructive student behavior and active participation, ultimately contributing to greater job satisfaction.

The mediating roles of student behavior and participation further suggest that the benefits of professional autonomy extend beyond administrative flexibility and become meaningful through improved teacher–student interactions. Consequently, educational policies designed to enhance teacher satisfaction should simultaneously strengthen teachers' professional autonomy and support instructional environments that encourage positive student engagement. From a practical perspective, school leaders and educational policymakers should consider expanding teachers' decision-making authority, reducing unnecessary administrative constraints, promoting participatory classroom practices, and implementing programs that improve student behavior and classroom climate. Such integrated interventions may contribute not only to higher teacher satisfaction but also to improved instructional quality and educational effectiveness. Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on teacher well-being by providing empirical evidence for a structural model linking organizational autonomy, classroom processes, and job satisfaction. Future research may extend this model by examining additional organizational, psychological, and contextual variables across different educational settings.

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