

## Vietnamese Primary School Teachers' Job Satisfaction

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**ABSTRACT:** The study explores teacher job satisfaction among teachers working in primary schools in Vietnam. The data used in this study was taken from the TALIS 2018 survey conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. The data includes 3,991 primary school teachers. The investigation found that the teachers were content with their professional lives and work environments. The results have suggested that the teachers are satisfied with their job. Implications of this research are also included.

**KEYWORDS:** Teacher, job satisfaction, professional satisfaction, environment satisfaction

### INTRODUCTION

Teacher job satisfaction is a critical aspect of education systems worldwide, impacting individual educators, student outcomes, school effectiveness, and educational policy formulation. According to the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2018), ninety-three percent of teachers in Vietnam chose teaching as their first career. It was also reported that 95% of primary school teachers have a permanent contract, while 71% are employed full-time. However, as reported by this organization, due to aged teachers, Vietnam will have to renew approximately one in seven members of its teaching workforce in the next decade. According to a statistical result provided by Công Thông Tin Điện Tử (CTTDT) (2022), the turnover rate and job change have signaled an alarm in recent years. The number of teachers who quit their teaching job and chose another profession in 2021 and 2022 reached 16.265, and in the academic year of 2022-2023, there were over 19.300 public school teachers who retired (10.094) and quit their jobs (9295). Consequently, Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) wrote a plan to attract more people to take on the teaching profession, and it regards this as an urgent mission (CTTDT, 2023). As stated by Phan and Tran (2021), to succeed in having more teachers in the future, in addition to teachers' efforts, teachers' job satisfaction cannot be devalued, which means that many objective factors, such as social respect and recognition can influence their job satisfaction.

The study attempts to provide information about job satisfaction among primary school teachers in Vietnam; this investigation centers on two types of satisfaction: professional satisfaction and work environment satisfaction. Therefore, the study aims to answer the two following research questions:

1. To what extent are primary school teachers satisfied with their profession?
2. To what extent are primary school teachers satisfied with work environment satisfaction?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Job satisfaction among teachers encompasses a broad spectrum of factors, including organizational climate, leadership support, workload, professional development opportunities, compensation, autonomy, collegial relationships, and recognition (Hakanen et al., 2006; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). *Job satisfaction* is a pleasant emotional state that comes from appraising an individual's job or job experiences (Sun & Xia, 2018). TALIS 2018 adopted Locke's definition, referring to teacher job satisfaction as the satisfaction and accomplishment that teachers feel in their work as teachers. It is divided into two dimensions: job satisfaction with the work environment and the profession (OECD, 2019a). Many factors can be seen to affect teacher satisfaction. Working environment, job responsibility, social relations, leadership styles, and professional development might influence teacher job satisfaction (Ho et al., 2023). In addition, there is a solid relationship between teacher job satisfaction and teaching quality, and satisfaction can be gained from belief, motivation, and effort because all these can affect their profession (Perševica, 2011). Moreover, research conducted by Wang et al. (2019) found that rural teachers tend to leave their teaching job due to resource shortages. Moreover, teacher job satisfaction is triggered by the internal psychology of individual and external factors, such as opportunities to develop their profession, income, morality, work environment, and other relationships with their colleagues and bosses (Nguyen, 2014).

Research suggests that satisfied teachers are more likely to exhibit enthusiasm, dedication, and commitment to their profession, positively influencing student engagement, academic achievement, and socio-emotional development (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000).

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In contrast, low levels of job satisfaction may lead to teacher burnout, absenteeism, turnover, and diminished instructional quality, ultimately affecting student learning experiences and educational outcomes (Ingersoll, 2001). Furthermore, the determinants of job satisfaction may vary across different contexts, including school settings, grade levels, subject areas, and socio-cultural environments (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010).

### METHOD

This study performed a secondary analysis, and the data were taken from a TALIS 2018 provided by OECD. The data had been carefully designed by the OECD. In each country, a representative sample of 4,000 teachers and their school principals from 200 schools was randomly selected for the study. To gather data, TALIS administers questionnaires to teachers and principals. The program's primary purpose is to generate information that can be used to develop and implement policies about school leaders, teachers, and teaching, emphasizing those aspects that affect students. It gives teachers and school leaders a voice, allowing them to provide input into educational policy analysis and development in critical areas. In Vietnam, 3,991 primary school teachers completed the TALIS questionnaires, of whom there were 818 males (20.5%) and 3173 females (79.5%). Teaching as a first choice accounts for 93.9%. The average teaching year among these teachers in the same school was 12.3 years. The average year of teaching experience was 17.66.

The variables chosen to investigate in this study are work environment satisfaction and the work environment. The professional satisfaction scale consisted of four items: "The advantages of being a teacher clearly outweigh the disadvantages," "If I could decide again, I would still choose to work as a teacher," "I regret that I decided to become a teacher, and "I wonder whether it would have been better to choose another profession." The work environment satisfaction included four items: "I would like to change to another school if that were possible," "I enjoy working at this school," "I would recommend my school as a good place to work," and "All in all, I am satisfied with my job." All the items were measured on a 4-point Likert response with 1 for "strongly disagree", 2 for "disagree", 3 for "agree", and 4 for "strongly agree".

Table 1 presents the internal reliability of professional satisfaction, and Table 2 presents the internal reliability of work environment satisfaction.

**Table 1. Reliability Statistics of professional satisfaction**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.645	4

**Table 2. Reliability Statistics of work environment satisfaction**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.728	4

The Alpha values of .645 and .728 reach the reliability standard so that they can be used for further investigation.

### RESULTS

The authors analyzed the mean scores of the two variables using SPSS 22 to measure the mean scores, and the results are shown in Table 3 and Table 4 below.

The authors analyzed the mean scores of the two variables using SPSS 22 to measure the mean scores, and the results are shown in Table 3 and Table 4 below.

An overall result from Table 3 shows that primary school teachers were content with their profession. As stated in the Method section, the questionnaire used a four-scale measurement: 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for agree, and 4 for strongly agree. The items "I regret that I decided to become a teacher" and "I wonder whether it would have been better to choose another profession" asked about negative satisfaction. Hence, the authors reversed the numbered scales to assemble the positive ones for the mean score. All the items received a score of three or above, meaning they tend to agree with the statement items.

Similarly, the result obtained from Table 4 shows that the teachers are content with their work environment. The authors also reversed the numbered scales of one negative item, "I would like to change to another school if that were possible", to assemble the rest for the mean scores. No items were found below three, meaning they are also satisfied with their working conditions.

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### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The paper aims to explore the status of teacher job satisfaction in terms of two subscales: professional satisfaction and work environment satisfaction. The results differ from those of people who used to worry about teachers' job satisfaction in a few articles. Much concern was received from the CTTDT (2022), which found in their statistics that the turnover rate of teachers and teachers who have changed their jobs signal an alarm. They also reported that in the academic year 2021 - 2022, the turnover toll reached 16.265, and in the academic year 2022-2023, this number has increased to over 19.300 public schools 9295. In addition, this number is aligned with the statistics from the data, which says 93% of the teachers found a teaching career as their priority. Then, it can be seen that the average teaching year of these teachers constitutes over 12 years, and the data has shown that their average teaching experience accounts for 17.66, which means that they have maintained their working as teachers in the same school in a relatively long path.

The teachers might have overcome many negative factors affecting their satisfaction. Factors like internal psychology and external factors (Ho and et al., 2023; Ingersoll, 2001; Nguyen, 2014; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010) can also affect teacher job satisfaction. The results can also indicate that these teachers might have received sufficient support from their school and have good relationships with their colleagues and principals, as mentioned by Hakanen et al. (2006) and Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2017).

### IMPLICATIONS

These results can be used as a reference for related educational stakeholders to consider current teachers' job satisfaction regarding professional satisfaction and work environment satisfaction among primary school teachers. There is a need to solely investigate teacher job satisfaction among primary school teachers nationwide to see if they are content with both professional status and working conditions. This suggestion is just like what Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has proposed to improve job sustainability among public school teachers in Vietnam (CTTDT, 2023). There should be some potential factors that might hurt primary school teachers' job satisfaction. Phan and Tran (2021) also concluded that teachers need social respect and recognition to determine their emotional energy and motivation. If they are motivated, they can think of devoting more time and effort to harnessing their students' potential and making them brilliant professionals in the future. This harmony can create miracles that help educate students to become responsible citizens and whole people, contributing to building and developing a strong country. Therefore, it is essential to identify the factors that affect a teacher's satisfaction with the teaching profession. For example, in Vietnam, respecting teachers and recognizing their job devotion can be crucial in motivating people to join the teaching profession and sustaining their teaching interests (Phan and Tran (2021).

### LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study can only provide the quantitative result, which is based on the numbers to determine the degree of teachers' perceived satisfaction with their professional life and work environment. Another qualitative research must be conducted to delve into why they are content with their job and working environment. In order to achieve more results on what factors may influence job satisfaction, papers exploring relationships between other research variables on teacher job satisfaction can be conducted.

The current study explored the job satisfaction status of Vietnamese teachers who work in primary schools. The data showed they are satisfied with their professional life and work environment. Such results can be a positive indicator for related stakeholders to consider.

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