

Happiness, self-esteem and Job satisfaction of Teachers: A systematic Review

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Abstract

This study examined the interrelationship among happiness, self-esteem, and job satisfaction of teachers, while also exploring the existing gaps within these dimensions. A qualitative research approach was adopted, and the investigation was primarily based on secondary data sources, including scholarly articles, books, and previous research studies. The findings reveal a significant and positive relationship among happiness, self-esteem, and job satisfaction in teachers. The study further highlights that variations in these factors may influence teachers' professional effectiveness and overall well-being. These insights emphasize the need to foster a supportive environment that strengthens teachers' self-esteem and happiness, thereby enhancing their job satisfaction and professional commitment.

Keywords: Happiness, self-esteem, job satisfaction

Introduction

Every human heart longs for happiness. It is the silent desire that lives within us all a gentle hope that colours our dreams and guides our actions. Happiness is not merely a fleeting emotion; it is a cherished state of being that gives meaning to our existence. Since the dawn of civilization, humanity has sought this precious treasure. Ancient scriptures, philosophical texts, and cultural traditions-including those of India-speak of happiness as life's ultimate pursuit. Happiness is the warmth that lights up our faces with a smile, the laughter that echoes from a joyful heart, and the deep sense of contentment that makes life worthwhile. It is found in moments of peace, in meaningful relationships, and in the quiet satisfaction of living with purpose. True happiness is not just excitement or pleasure; it is the harmony between our desires, actions, and inner self. Yet, in the fast-paced world of the 21st century, happiness often feels distant. People are caught in an endless race-striving for success, wealth, and recognition. In this relentless pursuit of material achievements, many forget to pause and appreciate the simple joys of life. We become so focused on reaching our goals that we overlook the beauty of the journey itself. Perhaps true happiness does not lie in possessing more, but in appreciating what we already have. It blossoms when we practice gratitude, nurture

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relationships, and find balance between ambition and inner peace. In the end, happiness is not a destination we arrive at—it is a way of living, a choice we make every day.

Humanity has come to realize that staying safe, healthy, and happy is far more valuable than the pursuit of wealth or fame. The crisis reminded us that life's true riches lie not in material success, but in well-being, resilience, and inner peace. Amid the many demanding and responsible roles individuals undertake, the role of a teacher stands out as both challenging and profoundly significant. Teaching is not merely a job; it is a dynamic, multifaceted, and deeply rewarding profession. From the foundational years of primary education to the advanced stages of higher learning, teachers serve as guides, mentors, and pillars of support for their students. Their influence shapes minds, nurtures character, and builds the future of society. Such a responsibility demands unwavering dedication, patience, and concentration. Beyond delivering lessons, teachers are entrusted with inspiring confidence, fostering curiosity, and creating an environment where students can grow not only academically but emotionally. For teachers to spread happiness, encouragement, and positivity, they themselves must experience a sense of well-being. Yet, amid heavy workloads, evolving expectations, and unprecedented challenges like remote teaching during the pandemic, an important question arises: Are teachers able to preserve their own happiness while fulfilling their responsibilities? Understanding and addressing this concern is essential, for the well-being of teachers directly influences the well-being of the generations they educate.

Self-Esteem refers to an individual's overall sense of personal worth and value. It reflects how a person thinks and feels about their own qualities, abilities, and characteristics. Rooted in personal beliefs and self-perception, self-esteem is shaped by our thoughts, experiences, relationships, culture, religion, and social environment. Because it develops over time, it is not always easy to change. It encompasses elements such as identity, self-acceptance, confidence, pride, humility, and appreciation of oneself. The Cambridge Dictionary defines self-esteem as belief and confidence in one's own ability and value. Similarly, Rosenberg (1965) described it as an individual's overall positive evaluation of their internal worth. Adler and Stewart (2004) explain it as the degree to which a person values, approves of, or likes themselves, while Ellis (1994) emphasized that self-esteem involves evaluating one's behaviours and qualities as positive or negative, thereby judging oneself as worthy or unworthy. At its core, self-esteem often develops through self-comparison and personal judgment. In contrast, self-acceptance fosters a stable and secure relationship with oneself (Kernis & Lakey, 2010). In psychology, self-esteem remains one of the most widely studied concepts, as researchers continue to explore what it is and how profoundly it influences human thoughts, emotions, and behaviour.

Job satisfaction is a key contributor to overall work efficiency. It emerges from the relationship between what employees expect from their jobs and what they actually receive—such as salary, status, and recognition. As described by John W. Mathis (1997), satisfaction refers to events that create a subjective feeling of relief or pleasure. These feelings can be expressed by the individual experiencing them, but they are not directly observable by others. According to Edwin A. Locke (1976), job satisfaction is a positive and

pleasant emotional state that arises from a person's evaluation of their job. Katherine Miller (2009) notes that Locke's definition remains one of the most widely cited and accepted explanations of the concept. Job satisfaction has also been described as a psychological disposition toward one's work, reflecting the extent to which employees' expectations align with their actual work experiences (Schultz, 1982; Capotescu, 2006). However, understanding job satisfaction only in a general sense is often insufficient for accurate measurement. To effectively assess satisfaction levels, it is essential to identify and analyze the specific attitudes that collectively shape an individual's overall job satisfaction, which can vary significantly from one job context to another (Schultz, 1990).

Teaching is a challenging, dynamic, and deeply rewarding profession. Teacher's guide and support learners at every stage- from primary education to higher studies—requiring immense dedication, patience, and focus. To inspire and nurture students effectively, teachers themselves must experience happiness and fulfilment in their roles. However, whether teachers are able to maintain this sense of happiness while fulfilling their responsibilities remains an important area of study. A teacher's self-esteem is also a critical factor in successful teaching. High self-esteem enables teachers to perform confidently and positively influences students' self-belief and learning outcomes. Since various personal and professional factors can shape teachers' self-esteem, understanding its relationship with their happiness and job satisfaction becomes essential. Teacher job satisfaction is not only important for reducing teacher shortages but also for enhancing teachers' everyday experiences. Satisfied teachers are more likely to create engaging learning environments, support student achievement, and contribute meaningfully to society. Research shows that job satisfaction is closely linked to teachers' professional effectiveness, commitment, and long-term dedication to the teaching profession.

Objectives

- To identify how happiness, self-esteem and job satisfaction of teachers were inter-correlated.
- To examine the gaps in happiness, self-esteem and job satisfaction among teachers.

Methodology

The present study employs a qualitative research approach to examine the interrelationship between happiness, self-esteem and job satisfaction of teachers. This approach facilitates an in-depth exploration of concepts, perspectives, and theoretical frameworks. The study relies on secondary data, drawing from a comprehensive review of national and international peer-reviewed journals, academic books, theses, dissertations, project reports, and conference papers, ensuring a rich and credible knowledge base.

Discussion and analysis

Objective 1: To identify how happiness, self-esteem and job satisfaction of teachers were inter-correlated

Happiness of Teachers

Several empirical studies have explored the dynamics of teachers' happiness and its implications for health, performance, and workplace outcomes across diverse contexts.

Benevene, P. et al. (2019) investigated the effect of teachers' happiness on health among 282 in-service teachers in Rome, Italy. Their findings revealed that happiness at work partially mediates the relationship between dispositional happiness and health, and fully mediates the link between self-esteem and health. The study further emphasized that self-esteem promotes health-related behaviours, enhancing both physical and psychological well-being. Teachers who perceived their workplace as a positive environment reported stronger health benefits derived from dispositional happiness and self-esteem. In Turkey, Mertoğul, M. (2018) examined happiness levels among 480 teachers across primary, secondary, and high schools. Results showed generally high happiness levels, with no significant differences based on age, marital status, seniority, or income. However, teachers' willingness to attend school significantly influenced happiness. Income demonstrated a positive correlation with happiness scores. Similarly, Toulabi, Z. et al. (2013) studied 702 high school teachers and found a strong relationship between teachers' happiness and quality of working life. Key determinants included salary, managerial support, job security, promotion opportunities, professional development, and participation in decision-making. İhtiyaroğlu, N. (2018) explored the predictive role of happiness and life satisfaction on classroom management profiles among 384 secondary teachers. The findings indicated that happiness and life satisfaction positively predicted appreciative classroom management styles while negatively predicting indifferent styles, highlighting the pedagogical impact of teacher well-being. Focusing on economic and non-economic determinants, Habibzadeh, S. and Allahviridiyani, K. (2011) reported no significant association between happiness and demographic variables such as age, marital status, education, or income. However, economic security, job satisfaction, financial balance, travel opportunities, and gender showed significant relationships with happiness. Gender comparisons by Kamala, H. and Reddy, K. J. (2013) among college teachers in Bengaluru revealed no significant gender differences in happiness across demographic variables, suggesting that professional well-being transcends basic demographic distinctions. Exploring performance outcomes, Yadav, B. (2012) identified a positive correlation between happiness and teaching effectiveness among 300 teachers in Uttar Pradesh. Teachers aged 30–35 with 5–10 years of experience demonstrated higher happiness scores, reinforcing the link between well-being and professional competence. Finally, Bhatia, A. and Mohsin, F. (2020) conducted an exploratory review on workplace happiness among university teachers. They highlighted the interconnectedness of happiness, engagement, satisfaction, and overall life fulfilment, emphasizing the need for structured frameworks to measure workplace happiness. The authors noted that research on higher education teachers' happiness remains limited, calling for expanded scholarly attention.

Across cultural contexts, teacher happiness emerges as a multidimensional construct influenced by self-esteem, workplace climate, economic security, and professional engagement. Importantly, happiness not

only enhances teachers' health but also positively shapes classroom management and teaching effectiveness, underscoring its central role in educational quality and institutional well-being.

Self-esteem of teachers

Research on teachers' professional self-esteem highlights its role as a crucial psychological resource influencing identity, motivation, and professional effectiveness.

Tabassum, F. and Ali, M. A. (2012) examined the professional self-esteem of 146 secondary school teachers using a simple random sampling technique. The study compared teachers across subject streams (science/arts), locality (rural/urban), and gender. Findings revealed **no** significant difference between arts and science teachers or between rural and urban teachers. However, a significant gender difference was observed in overall professional self-esteem, indicating that gender may influence teachers' professional self-perception at the secondary level. In higher education, Jan, F. et al. (2015) explored factors shaping teachers' self-esteem. The study conceptualized self-esteem as a continuous personal evaluation of self-worth, nurtured through positive social interactions. It emphasized that constructive feedback, respect, acceptance, warmth, and supportive institutional environments play a pivotal role in strengthening teachers' sense of professional value. Similarly, Shah, K. and Pathak, S. (2014) investigated perceived self-esteem among 240 secondary and higher secondary school teachers. The results indicated no significant differences in self-esteem across teaching levels, gender, or years of experience (above or below 10 years), suggesting that professional self-esteem remains relatively stable across demographic and experiential variables.

The reviewed studies suggest that while demographic and institutional factors may occasionally influence professional self-esteem, it largely remains a stable construct shaped by social validation, institutional support, and positive professional recognition. Strengthening respectful and affirming work environments appears essential for fostering teachers' professional self-worth.

Job satisfaction of teachers

Extensive research across regions highlights that teachers' job satisfaction is shaped by employment status, institutional support, compensation, designation, and work environment.

In West Bengal, Dutta, A. et al. (2014) found that part-time college teachers in Hooghly district reported a moderate level of job satisfaction, with no significant influence of demographic variables such as gender, locality, stream, qualification, experience, or income. Similarly, Senthikumar, V. and Kannappa, R. (2016) observed that Arts and Science college teachers in Tiruchirapalli exhibited average job satisfaction, though permanent teachers reported significantly higher satisfaction than temporary faculty. Research in Maharashtra by Bholane, P. K. (2015) revealed that university teachers were most satisfied with the nature of their work, yet overall satisfaction remained moderate. In Coimbatore, Ganapati, R. (2017) identified significant differences in job satisfaction across streams (arts, science, commerce) and academic designations.

At University of Delhi, Nigam, N. K. and Jain, S. (2013) reported no significant difference in satisfaction between Associate and Assistant Professors overall, though subject-based differences emerged in certain streams. Contractual employment emerged as a critical determinant. Katoch, O. R. (2012) and Malik, M. (2013) both documented significant dissatisfaction among contract and ad hoc teachers, particularly regarding salary and job security. Supporting this, Mani, S. and Shyam, V. M. (2013) found permanent teachers significantly more satisfied than temporary faculty. Gender- and designation-based differences were also reported by Murugeswari, M. et al. (2015), who found significant differences between Associate and Assistant Professors and between permanent and temporary teachers, though no stream-based differences were noted. Comparative studies further enriched the discourse. Gupta, D. (2014) showed that guest lecturers had higher job satisfaction, whereas part-time lecturers demonstrated stronger organizational commitment. Adhikari, K. and Paul, S. (2015) found government Degree College teachers dissatisfied with pay, welfare facilities, and promotion policies, though collegial support was satisfactory. Likewise, Kaur, J. et al. (2014) identified positive correlations between job satisfaction and salary, recognition, autonomy, grievance handling, and participation in decision-making. Behera, D. (2014) established a positive relationship between job satisfaction and teachers' mental health. International evidence reinforces these findings. Shafi, M. (2016) in Pakistan reported dissatisfaction related to promotion systems and pay equity. Latif, K. et al. (2011) found public college teachers more satisfied than private college teachers across pay, job security, and work-life balance. In the United States, Cashwell, A. L. (2009) highlighted administrative support as a key predictor of part-time faculty satisfaction in the Colorado community college system. Earlier, Borg, M. G. and Riding, R. J. (1991) in England demonstrated that job satisfaction positively correlated with self-esteem and negatively correlated with occupational stress, absenteeism, and turnover intentions. Finally, Haghbin, S. et al. (2016) in Iran reported significant differences in mental health, job satisfaction, and organizational support between teachers in special and ordinary schools, underscoring the influence of institutional context.

Across studies, teachers' job satisfaction consistently emerges as moderate yet highly sensitive to employment status, salary structures, promotion policies, organizational support, and institutional fairness. Permanent appointments, equitable pay, recognition, autonomy, and supportive leadership significantly enhance satisfaction, while contractual insecurity, inadequate compensation, and stress undermine it. Importantly, job satisfaction is strongly linked to mental health, organizational commitment, and professional effectiveness-making it a critical determinant of educational quality and institutional stability.

Relationship between happiness and job satisfaction of teachers

Several studies have examined the relationship between teachers' happiness, job satisfaction, and professional outcomes across different cultural contexts.

Buragohain, P. and Hazarika, M. (2015) investigated the happiness and job satisfaction of 281 secondary school teachers in Dibrugarh district, Assam. The findings revealed significant rural-urban differences in happiness, while no gender-based differences were observed. Regular teachers reported significantly higher happiness and job satisfaction than contractual teachers. Importantly, the study established a positive

correlation between happiness and job satisfaction, highlighting their interdependence. In Bhutan, Gyeltshen, C. and Beri, N. (2019) conducted two complementary studies among 225 secondary school teachers. The first study found no significant gender differences in workplace happiness, though female teachers demonstrated higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work motivation. The second study reported that most teachers experienced average levels of workplace happiness and job satisfaction, while organizational commitment remained relatively high. Exploring performance-related outcomes, Jalali, Z. and Heidari, A. (2015) identified a significant relationship between happiness, creativity, and job performance among 330 primary school teachers in Iran. Regression analysis confirmed that happiness and creativity were strong predictors of job performance. Similarly, Urrutia, D. J. et al. (2019) examined the link between happiness, job satisfaction, and performance among public secondary school teachers in Cavite. The study demonstrated that both happiness and job satisfaction were significantly associated with job performance, particularly when teachers experienced higher levels of pleasant, meaningful, and engaged living. In another Iranian study, Zareshahabadi, A. et al. (2013) reported a positive correlation between job satisfaction and social happiness among high school teachers. Female teachers showed higher levels of both job satisfaction and social happiness compared to males, while marital status and academic qualifications showed no significant differences.

Relationship between happiness and self-esteem of teachers

Benevene, P. et al. (2018) examined the role of self-esteem and happiness in predicting teachers' health, highlighting the mediating influence of job satisfaction. Conducted among 300 primary and middle school teachers, the study revealed that job satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between both self-esteem and happiness with teachers' health. The findings emphasize that the workplace is a crucial domain for enhancing teachers' psychological well-being. By strengthening job satisfaction, schools can foster greater happiness, higher self-esteem, and improved overall health among teachers.

Similarly, Hwang, H. et al. (2015) investigated the impact of self-esteem and gratitude disposition on happiness among 192 pre-service early childhood teachers. The study found that participants reported above-average levels of happiness, self-esteem, and gratitude. Importantly, a significant positive correlation emerged among these variables, indicating that both self-esteem and gratitude disposition are strong contributors to teachers' happiness.

Relationship between job satisfaction and self-esteem of teachers

A growing body of research consistently highlights self-esteem as a powerful predictor of teachers' job satisfaction.

Reilly, E., Dhingra, K., and Boduszek, D. (2013) examined primary school teachers and found no gender differences in job satisfaction, self-efficacy, self-esteem, or perceived stress. However, a strong positive relationship emerged between self-esteem and job satisfaction, indicating that teachers with higher self-worth

experience greater professional satisfaction. Similarly, Ghafari, H. H. S. and Samii, M. (2013) reported a significant association between self-esteem and job satisfaction among university teachers. Supporting this, Dey, B. K. et al. (2013) found a positive correlation between teachers' self-esteem and job satisfaction in the Chittagong region. In comparative research, Zafar, N. et al. (2014) observed that self-esteem and job satisfaction were not influenced by gender or type of school, reinforcing the stability of this relationship across contexts. Expanding the predictive framework, Cevik, G. B. (2017) demonstrated that life satisfaction, teaching efficacy, and self-esteem significantly predict job satisfaction among high school teachers. Teachers with high self-esteem reported greater satisfaction, while low self-esteem was linked to professional dissatisfaction. Further strengthening this evidence, Sahu, S., Srivastava, A., and Pathardikar, A. D. (2019) found that self-esteem and work engagement significantly influence job satisfaction. Work engagement partially mediated the relationship between self-esteem and job satisfaction, suggesting that when teachers perceive their work as meaningful and aligned with their self-worth, satisfaction increases. Likewise, Beri, N. and Arora, S. (2016) confirmed a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and job satisfaction among primary school teachers. Both male and female teachers with higher self-esteem reported greater job satisfaction.

Interrelation between Teachers' Happiness, Self-Esteem, and Job Satisfaction

A careful review of the literature reveals that teachers' happiness, professional self-esteem, and job satisfaction are deeply interconnected psychological constructs, each reinforcing and strengthening the others within the educational environment. First, self-esteem functions as a foundational personal resource. Studies show that teachers with stronger professional self-esteem perceive themselves as competent, valued, and respected. This positive self-evaluation enhances emotional stability and resilience, which in turn fosters greater happiness. For instance, research on happiness indicates that self-esteem promotes health-related behaviours and psychological well-being, while earlier findings (e.g., Borg & Riding, 1991) demonstrate a positive correlation between self-esteem and job satisfaction and a negative relationship with stress and absenteeism. Thus, self-esteem appears to operate as an internal driver that shapes both happiness and satisfaction at work. Second, happiness acts as both an outcome and a mediator. Evidence suggests that dispositional happiness influences teachers' health and teaching effectiveness, while workplace happiness mediates the relationship between personal traits (e.g., self-esteem) and professional outcomes. Teachers who experience positive emotions are more likely to adopt appreciative classroom management styles, demonstrate higher teaching effectiveness, and report better mental health. Happiness therefore strengthens professional engagement and enhances job satisfaction by promoting positive attitudes toward work. Third, job satisfaction represents the organizational dimension of well-being. Multiple studies indicate that satisfaction is strongly influenced by salary, job security, promotion opportunities, recognition, autonomy, administrative support, and institutional fairness. When these organizational factors are favourable, they contribute to higher levels of happiness and reinforce teachers' professional self-worth. Conversely, contractual insecurity, inadequate pay, and occupational stress reduce satisfaction, which may weaken self-esteem and overall happiness.

Taken together, the literature suggests a reciprocal and cyclical relationship:

- Professional self-esteem enhances happiness.
- Happiness strengthens job satisfaction and teaching effectiveness.
- Job satisfaction reinforces self-esteem and sustained happiness.
- All three contribute positively to mental health, commitment, and educational quality.

In essence, self-esteem represents the internal psychological base, happiness reflects the emotional experience, and job satisfaction embodies the institutional outcome of teachers' professional well-being. Thus, teachers' professional well-being is not shaped by isolated factors but by an integrated psychological ecosystem where self-worth, satisfaction, and happiness continuously interact.

Objective 2: To examine the gaps in happiness, self-esteem and job satisfaction among teachers.

Despite substantial research, several important gaps remain-

1. **Limited Integrated Models-** Most studies examine happiness, self-esteem, or job satisfaction independently. There is a lack of comprehensive models investigating the simultaneous interaction among all three variables within a single framework.
2. **Scarcity of Longitudinal Research-** The majority of studies employ cross-sectional survey designs. Longitudinal studies are needed to determine causal relationships and long-term effects.
3. **Underrepresentation of Higher Education Contexts-** Much of the research focuses on primary and secondary school teachers. Research on workplace happiness and professional self-esteem among university teachers remains limited compared to school-level teachers.
4. **Context-Specific Comparative Studies-** Few studies compare public vs. private institutions, rural vs. urban settings, or permanent vs. contractual faculty in an integrated psychological model.
5. **Intervention-Based Research Deficit-** There is limited empirical evidence on structured interventions designed to simultaneously enhance teachers' self-esteem, happiness, and job satisfaction.
6. **Cultural and Cross-National Comparisons-** Although studies exist in various countries, comparative cross-cultural analyses examining how sociocultural factors shape these constructs are scarce.
7. **Emerging workplace Challenges-** The impact of digitalization, hybrid teaching models, workload intensification and policy reforms on these psychological constructs remains insufficiently examined.

Conclusion

The reviewed of literature clearly establishes that teachers' happiness, professional self-esteem, and job satisfaction are mutually reinforcing pillars of teacher well-being. However, the absence of integrative, longitudinal, and intervention-based research highlights a significant gap. Strengthening this interconnected framework is crucial for sustaining teachers' well-being, effectiveness, and long-term commitment to the

profession. Future research should adopt holistic models to better understand how these psychological dimensions collectively influence teachers' health, commitment, and overall educational effectiveness.

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