

Original Research Paper

## Teacher Professional Identity, Work Engagement, and Emotion Influence: How Do They Affect Teachers' Career Satisfaction

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**Abstract:** Teachers' behaviours significantly influence students' learning outcomes but also play an important role in national development and construction. However, few studies have attempted to investigate the interrelationships between teachers' professional identity, work engagement, emotion, and attitude towards career satisfaction. This study aims to explore the effect of professional identity and emotion on work engagement and career satisfaction separately and to investigate the influence of work engagement on attitude and, subsequently career satisfaction. A convenience sampling technique includes 221 valid questionnaires that were subjected to descriptive analysis followed by subsequent empirical testing of the populated hypotheses using SPSS and AMOS. Results showed that professional identity and emotion positively influence work engagement and career satisfaction respectively. Work engagement positively influenced attitude and, subsequently career satisfaction. Last, the theoretical and practical implications and limitations were discussed.

**Keywords:** Emotion, Professional Identity, Teachers' Attitudes Toward Career Satisfaction, Work Engagement.



## 1. Introduction

Human resource management is viewed as important in defining the social context of employee behaviour [1] since employee satisfaction is greatly improved when they are allowed to make decisions they can handle and decide how to accomplish their tasks [2]. Educational research has always maintained teachers as its core unit of analysis because teachers behaviours significantly influence students' learning outcomes [3], and more importantly, teachers play a vital role in national development and construction [4]. However, in many countries, almost half of the teachers leave the profession within their first years [5], dissatisfaction with the teaching profession seems to be an important reason for them to leave it [6-8].

Teachers' career satisfaction denotes teachers' emotional relations with their jobs and perception of the outcomes of the teaching task [9]. A high level of career satisfaction occurs when teachers feel themselves involved in a significant working experience [10] with a satisfactory matching between work expectations and work reality [11], and cognitive and emotional resources to be devoted to this [12] [13]. Generally, satisfied teachers show higher productivity, have a higher commitment towards their career as compared to unsatisfied teachers and are loyal to their profession [14] [15]. Employers and human resource managers can organise training courses to enhance teachers' positive attitudes towards smart work and implement participatory human resource measures to support changes in working methods and procedures, thereby arousing their positive attitudes towards work, enhancing their satisfaction, and fostering the willingness to reform and innovate in education [16]. It can be concluded that teachers' career satisfaction is influenced by contextual factors such as organisational, interpersonal, and individual levels [17]. Thus, it is necessary to know how satisfied teachers are with their work Abdurahman [4] and understand the factors that affect teachers' career satisfaction [18].

Previous studies on teachers' satisfaction, according to scholars, are always been the subject of research [19] by focusing on dropout or retention of teachers in the profession [19] and the influence of various factors related to the school environment and characteristics of teachers on teaching profession [20]. For example, teacher mindfulness can be effective in reducing teachers' stress while increasing their motivation and well-being [21] [23] and the changes in teachers' self-efficacy, satisfaction, professional commitment and motivation level are important for teachers' behaviours in all aspects [24]. Other studies demonstrated that teacher effectiveness expectations by considering the context in influencing teachers' work [25].

Teachers' professional identity experience is the core of their teaching practice due to its great significance to curriculum reform, classroom teaching and student learning [26]. Because the deep reciprocal relationship between teachers and emotional satisfaction in environment, society, and workplace teaching can form the conceptualisation of teachers' professional identity [27]. Indeed, teachers' professional identity is considered as a critical variable in fostering work engagement, subsequently alongside with emotion influence on their self-efficacy [28]. Besides, teachers often have positive emotions at work may directly lead to a lasting and positive state of work engagement [29]. Hence, it seems important to study the effect of professional identity, work engagement, and emotion on teachers' career satisfaction [30]. However, teachers' emotions have largely been neglected in contemporary educational literature [31]. More importantly, there are few studies focused on the influence of teachers' emotions and professional identity on their career satisfaction [17] [32]. Moreover, rare studies have investigated the interrelationships between professional identity, work engagement and emotion on teachers' satisfaction [32] [33]. Therefore, the subject of teachers' career satisfaction needs more empirical investigations [19] due to a deeper understanding of teachers' satisfaction is valuable for informing researchers, school leaders, and policy advisers. Thus, the main purposes of this study are to 1) to investigate the interrelationships between professional identity, work engagement, and emotion; and 2) to explore the effect of professional identity, emotion, and attitude on career satisfaction.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Professional Identity

Professional identity is an important factor in the professional development of teachers [34]. Professional identity refers to the teachers' positive attitudes and a strong sense of commitment to the profession [35]. It is a dynamic process [28] [36] as it can be expressed in the teachers' willingness to maintain their profession [35], teachers' behaviours including teaching efficiency and happiness in the classroom [28]. The improvement in the level of professional identity may occur before teaching practice such as when the level of professional identity of new teachers is different from that of expert teachers [37], in the teaching environment [38] or after teaching practice [39]. Indeed, how much a

teacher feels about the job, the role and working with school leaders and administrators can shape a teacher's professional identity [35, 40]. Thus, the development of professional identity is considered an important factor in affecting the qualification of pre-service teachers, their learning and work [37]. Moreover, in the case of future human resource professionals, the development of professional identity is currently the core model in the educational literature [41].

Previous studies showed that professional identity was significantly associated with career satisfaction. For example, Sun, et al. [35] indicated that there is a positive correlation between professional identity and career satisfaction. Baharuddin, et al. [3] demonstrated that teacher professional identity development significantly influences teacher job satisfaction. Many other studies also revealed that a strong professional identity determines an individual's career satisfaction and turnover intention [42] [43]. Meanwhile, empirical research also revealed how professional identity significantly correlated to work engagement [44]. For instance, Butakor, et al. [45] reported that teachers' professional identity is considered an important issue in teachers' work engagement due to a significant relationship that exists between teachers' professional identity and work engagement [46]. Zhou, et al. [47] also indicated that highly educational workers' professional identity significantly influenced their work engagement while Wang, et al. [48] revealed that employees' occupational identity has a positive impact on work engagement and career satisfaction. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H1: Professional identity is positively related to career satisfaction.*

*H2: Professional identity is positively related to work engagement.*

## **2.2. Work Engagement**

Work engagement is a motivational concept which refers to an active allocation of personal resources towards the tasks associated with the work role [49]. It is an enduring and positive, emotion-cognitive state of well-being at work which is different from burnout [50], thus, it is seen as an area where personality affects productivity [33]. In other words, work engagement can be viewed as a persistent and universal state of emotional motivation that is not focused on any particular object, event, person, or behaviour, but rather is related to a broader sense of work-related well-being [16]. Work engagement with an emotional attitude towards work creates a positive mindset related to work [51]. On the other hand, work engagement is closely related to work attitude, but has nothing to do with the role of perception [52]. Certain studies showed how work engagement influences an individual's attitude, for example, Gülbahar [53] indicated that work engagement, teamwork attitude, classroom diversity, thinking of work engagement and efficacy for classroom diversity together were seen to have a medium impact on teamwork attitude. Mukaihata, et al. [54] demonstrated that work engagement facilitates recovery attitude job satisfaction and Schaufeli [55] found that work engagement is positively related to work-related attitudes. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H3: Work engagement is positively related to attitude.*

## **2.3. Attitude Towards Satisfaction**

Attitude is a summary evaluation of feelings of favourableness/unfavourableness towards an object [56, 57]. It is similar to personal values, both participation and satisfaction may be influenced by one's attitude [58]. In education literature, positive emotions, long-term work commitment, attitude, wisdom, effective teaching strategies and teacher-student relationship affect teacher's performance in language teaching [59]. Indeed, work attitude, a favourable family environment, and a reduction of work-family conflict can create a stable work-life balance for teachers, as well as teachers' satisfaction with their work [4]. It can be seen that a teacher's attitude, whether positive or negative, has a certain relationship with a teacher's career satisfaction. For example, Wang, et al. [60] indicated that the more unique and favourable attitudes that individuals hold in their memories, the stronger the connection an individual has with satisfaction. Gülbahar, et al. [61] reported that the attitude of the teaching profession significantly influences pre-service teachers' satisfaction. Considering that teacher career satisfaction has been emphasised as a determining factor in positive or negative evaluations that are influenced by teachers' work attitudes and performance [62], thus, the following hypothesis is proposed for testing:

*H4: Attitude is positively related to career satisfaction.*

## 2.4. Emotion

Emotion can be considered a transient state that changes as circumstances change, or can be conceptualised as a stable trait of people, a personal experience that is more habitual or recurring over an extended period of time in daily life [63]. In particular, personal interest and enjoyment are the most evident indicators of emotional engagement [64]. Emotion is a core component throughout a teacher's life [65] because teachers are full of various emotions in their teaching practice [66]. Hence, aggregation of emotional reactions over time may have stronger influences on job attitudes and behaviours [67].

According to Vettori, et al. [66], factors such as job-related emotions, job solutions and cognition contribute to job satisfaction. In other words, career satisfaction is an evaluation of an emotional state which results from both what an employee feels (affect) about his/her job and what he/she thinks (cognition) about the various aspects of his/her job. Teachers' collective beliefs and the regulation of positive and negative emotions towards their professional role (i.e., hedonic balance) predicted job satisfaction because they would feel more satisfied when teachers were able to maximise their perceived positive emotions and minimise their perceived negative emotions [67]. Certain studies demonstrated how emotion positively influences career satisfaction, for example, Antonella, et al. [68] indicated that Italian teachers who see themselves as emotionally competent have higher levels of job satisfaction. Another study by Dreer [69] confirmed that positive emotions are likely to affect teachers' classroom behaviour and improve their work satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H5: Emotion is positively related to career satisfaction.*

Meanwhile, the emotion has a positive impact on teacher's job satisfaction, but also affects their work engagement, because work engagement is related to a person's cognitive and emotional energy during work activities [70]. Work engagement and positive emotion are interrelated, and work engagement can be seen as both the initiator of positive emotions and the direct result of positive emotions [29]. Besides, positive emotions can also indirectly improve work engagement by building personal relationships such as self-efficacy, resilience or vitality [71]. Granziera and Perera [72] demonstrated that teachers' happiness and emotion regulation strategies are significantly related to teacher engagement. For example, higher levels of individual and collective positive emotions such as enthusiasm, satisfaction and comfort, predicted higher levels of employees' work engagement [73]. Previous studies have shown how emotion significantly influences teachers' work engagement, Antonella, et al. [68] reported that emotion significantly influences teachers' work engagement while Zhao [28] indicated that when language teachers try to reduce their negative emotions increase in their work engagement. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H6: Emotion is positively related to teacher's work engagement.*

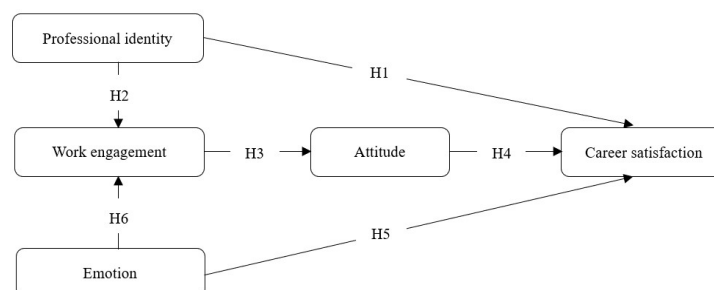


Figure 1. Conceptual Research Model

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Data collection

In social science, it may not be possible to acquire samples from an appropriate sampling frame, thus, non-probability sampling is an alternative technique to select samples based on research objectives

and researchers' subjective judgement [74]. A convenience sampling technique used for this study to collect data since it has many advantages such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, and willingness to participate are included for the study [75]. The questionnaires were distributed to teachers who are teaching in modules from six universities in Xuzhou City, Jiangsu Province and four universities in Taiyuan City, Shanxi Province, China from 15th September to 31st October 2023. The questionnaires were distributed to respondents in teachers' working groups (i.e., Tencent QQ groups), all potential respondents browsed the Chinese largest free online survey questionnaire collection website: [www.wenjuan.com](http://www.wenjuan.com) to complete the questionnaire using a scanned QR code without any incentives. Overall, 221 valid responses were collected which exceeded Kline [76] suggests that a minimum sample size of 200 respondents and between 10 and 20 cases per parameter is required for structural equation modelling and Hair Jr, et al. [77] indicate that the impact of normality can effectively diminishes when sample size more than 200. In addition, a pilot test with 30 respondents to ensure the questionnaire was valid and reliable.

### 3.2. Operationlisation

A closed-ended and self-administered questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale were adopted from past validated studies that applied for this study. Ten items belong to professional identity were adapted from Sun, et al. [35], five items belong to work engagement were adapted from Schaufeli and Bakker [78] and Sun, et al. [35], six items belong to emotion were adapted from Vettori, et al. [66] and Moè, et al. [79], four items belong to attitude were adapted from Yi, et al. [80] and Murwaningsih and Fauziah [81], and four items belong to career satisfaction were adapted from Wang, et al. [48] and Sun, et al. [35]. In addition, the demographic items were listed at end of the questionnaire. To ensure the internal reliability of the study, all variables were measured by Cronbach's alpha was exceeded the critical value of 0.7 (See Table 2).

## 4. Finding and Discussion

### 4.1. Descriptive Analysis

To ensure the distributed data is normalised, the skewness range from -2 to +2 and kurtosis range from -7 to +7 is considered [82]. The results showed that skewness range from -1.635 to -0.437 and the kurtosis range from -0.415 to 5.531, indicating distributed data was normal. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's test of Sphericity indicated sampling adequacy with 0.919,  $p < 0.05$  values. Out of 221 respondents, 55.7% of respondents were aged between 31 and 40, 82.8% of respondents were female, about 40.3% held master's degrees, and about 38.9% had 5 to 10 teaching experience (See Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 221)

Items	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 30	52	23.5
	31-40	123	55.7
	41-50	42	19
	51-60	2	0.9
	Above 61	2	0.9
Gender	Male	38	17.2
	Female	183	82.8
Educational level	Bachelor degree	61	27.6
	Master	89	40.3
	DBA	1	0.5
	Ph.D.	68	30.7
	Other	2	0.9
Years being teacher	Less than 3 years	49	22.2
	3 – 5 years	49	22.2
	5 – 10 years	86	38.9
	More than 10 years	37	16.7

### 4.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

High factor loadings (i.e., greater than 0.5) represent the majority of variance that can be explained by the variables [77], a cut-off value of factor loadings of 0.6 was set for achieving a better outcome for

this study. Thus, low factor loadings of items which professional identity1, professional identity2, professional identity7 and emotion3 were dropped and the rest of the factor loadings were higher than 0.6. For the convergent validity of the measurement model, the composite reliability (CR) should be greater than 0.7, and the average variance extracted (AVE) should be higher than 0.5. For discriminate validity of the measurement model, the AVE should be greater than maximum shared squared variance (MSV) and average shared square variance (ASV), as well as the correlation between each variable should be less than 0.9 [83]. Therefore, the convergent validity (See Table 2) and discriminate validity were established (See Table 3). The model fit summary as following: CMIN = 721.037, DF = 277,  $p < 0.05$ , CMIN/DF = 2.603, RMR = 0.073, RMSEA = 0.085, CFI = 0.926, GFI = 0.808, AGFI = 0.756, PGFI = 0.638, PNFI = 0.756, PCFI = 0.79, NFI = 0.887, IFI = 0.927, and TLI = 0.914. The overall goodness of fit values showed a good measurement model fit.

Table 2. Convergent Validity of The Measurement Model

Variables (Cronbach's Alpha)	Item	Item loadings	CR	AVE
Professional identity ( $\alpha =$ 0.912)	1. I think the teaching profession is very important to promote the development of human beings.	Delete	0.910	0.596
	2. I care about how others perceive the teaching profession.	Delete		
	3. As a teacher, I often feel respected.	0.683		
	4. Being a teacher can realise the value of my life.	0.714		
	5. I will be gratified when I see or hear words praising the teaching profession.	0.698		
	6. I am able to complete work tasks on time.	0.620		
	7. When introducing myself, I like to mention that I am a teacher.	Delete		
	8. I can take my work within my area of responsibility seriously.	0.886		
	9. I feel insulted when someone baselessly accuses teacher groups.	0.871		
	10. I think the work of teachers is important in promoting the growth and development of students.	0.884		
Work engagement ( $\alpha = 0.946$ )	1. I feel myself bursting with energy in my work.	0.876	0.947	0.780
	2. I feel strong and energised when I work.	0.876		
	3. I am proud of the work I do.	0.866		
	4. I will reach a state of forgetfulness when working.	0.905		
	5. As soon as I wake up in the morning, I want to go to work.	0.892		
Emotion ( $\alpha$ = 0.904)	As a teacher I experience during teaching I experience:		0.927	0.721
	1. Pride.	0.716		
	2. Gratification.	0.679		
	3. Enthusiasm.	Delete		
	4. Fulfilment.	0.918		
	5. Actualisation.	0.949		
Attitude ( $\alpha =$ 0.907)	6. Enrichment.	0.941	0.913	0.726
	1. I think it is wise to choose the profession of teacher.	0.747		
	2. I think the profession of teacher is very important.	0.884		
	3. I think the profession of teacher is valuable.	0.864		
	4. I think teachers should devote themselves to improving the quality of education.	0.905		
Career satisfaction ( $\alpha = 0.942$ )	1. I feel that I am doing something worthwhile in my career.	0.905	0.944	0.806
	2. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for the development of new skills.	0.885		
	3. I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career.	0.902		
	4. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement.	0.901		

Table 3. Discriminate Validity of The Measurement Model

Variables	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	1	2	3	4	5
1. Career satisfaction	0.944	0.806	0.778	0.504	<b>0.898</b>				
2. Professional identity	0.910	0.596	0.401	0.272	0.512	<b>0.772</b>			
3. Work engagement	0.947	0.780	0.778	0.485	0.882	0.633	<b>0.883</b>		
4. Emotion	0.927	0.721	0.537	0.334	0.733	0.293	0.635	<b>0.849</b>	
5. Attitude	0.913	0.726	0.438	0.361	0.662	0.584	0.597	0.555	<b>0.852</b>

### 4.3. Structural Equation Modelling

The next step was to perform the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using the structural model to test the hypotheses. The model fit summary showed that CMIN = 880.382, DF = 281,  $p < 0.05$ , CMIN/DF = 3.133, RMSEA = 0.098, CFI = 0.901, GFI = 0.782, PGFI = 0.626, PNFI = 0.745, PCFI = 0.779, NFI = 0.862, and IFI = 0.901. The results of model fit summary showed an acceptable value for the structural model.

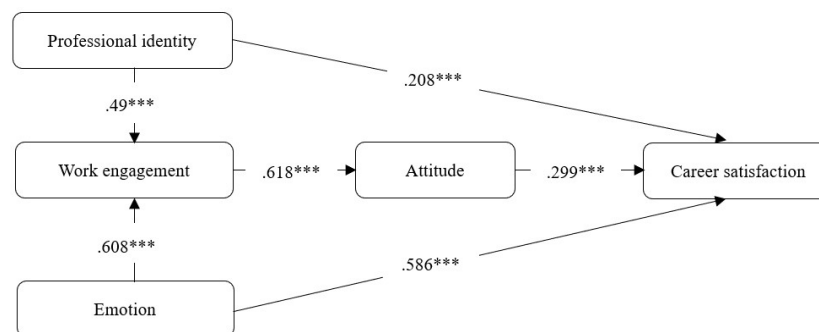


Figure 2. Results of the Study

The results of the structural model test were tabulated in Table 4 and Figure 2 accordingly.

Table 4. Results of the Study

Hypothesis	Parameter	Estimate	P	C.R.	Decision
H1	Professional identity -----> Career satisfaction	0.208	***	3.84	Supported
H2	Professional identity -----> Work engagement	0.49	***	6.707	Supported
H3	Work engagement -----> Attitude	0.618	***	8.084	Supported
H4	Attitude -----> Career satisfaction	0.299	***	5.091	Supported
H5	Emotion -----> Career satisfaction	0.586	***	8.787	Supported
H6	Emotion -----> Work engagement	0.608	***	8.842	Supported

### 4.4. Discussion

This study examined the effect of professional identity and emotion on work engagement; the effect of professional identity and emotion on career satisfaction; and the effect of work engagement on attitude, subsequently on career satisfaction. The results of the study show that professional identity positively and significantly influences career satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.208$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and work engagement ( $\beta = 0.49$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This means that teachers who perceive respect in this job, realise the value of their life, are proud of being a teacher, are responsible for the work, and perceive the importance of

this job for next generations are more willing to be full of energy and strong motivation to engage in teaching and are satisfied with the progress they have made toward meeting their goals for the development of new skills and advancement, as well as satisfied with the success they have achieved in their career and are more willing to spend more time engaging in teaching. These results correspond to previous studies that showed that professional identity positively influences teachers' work engagement and career satisfaction [3] [45] [46]. Thus, H1 and H2 were supported.

Previous studies showed that teachers' work engagement significantly influences their attitudes [53] [54], subsequently on career satisfaction [60] [61]. The results of this study demonstrate that work engagement positively and significantly influences attitude ( $\beta = 0.618$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and subsequently career satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.299$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that teachers who feel full of energy in work, proud of the teaching they do, and desire to work for students have positive evaluations of being teachers. Teachers who think this job is important and valuable, and willing to improve the quality of education are more satisfied with the progress they have made toward meeting their goals of personal achievement and advancement. Therefore, H3 and H4 were supported.

Certain studies showed that teachers' emotions significantly influence their work engagement [28, 68] and career satisfaction [45] [69]. The results of this study demonstrate that emotion significantly and positively influences work engagement ( $\beta = 0.608$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and career satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.586$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This means that teachers who experience pride, gratification, fulfilment, actualisation, and enrichment during their teaching career have more positive evaluations of this job feel that they are doing something worthwhile in their career and are satisfied with the success they have achieved in their career. Therefore, H5 and H6 were supported.

#### 4.5. Theoretical Contributions

Although professional identity, work engagement and emotion are considered important predictors that influence individuals' career satisfaction [17] [32]. However, few studies have investigated the influence of professional identity, work engagement and emotion together on teachers' career satisfaction [17]. This study's results show that professional identity and emotion positively and significantly influence teachers' career satisfaction. Besides, work engagement positively and significantly influences teachers' attitudes, then effects career satisfaction. Hence, further study should consider including professional identity, work engagement, and emotion to predict teachers' satisfaction.

Indeed, previous studies mainly focused on the influence of professional identity on career satisfaction, it seems that researchers ignore the influence of emotion on teachers' career satisfaction [31]. This study shows that researchers should consider applying professional identity alongside emotion to predict teachers' career satisfaction because using both constructs can increase the predictive power of teachers' career satisfaction in the research model.

In addition, certain studies showed that professional identity and emotion significantly influence one's work engagement [28] [47]. However, few studies have investigated the interrelationship between professional identity, work engagement and emotion toward career satisfaction [17]. Our results showed that professional identity and emotion positively influence work engagement respectively, then translate into one's attitude, and finally effect career satisfaction. Therefore, future studies should consider the interrelationships between professional identity, work engagement, emotion, and attitudes towards teachers' career satisfaction.

#### 4.6. Practical Implications

Certain practical implications can be concluded from this study. First, in order to create a supportive learning environment, institutions must prioritise ongoing professional development and promote regular teachers' cooperation. It is advised that initiatives like in-service training be implemented to give in-service instructors the chance to hone and enhance their emotional intelligence in order to encourage students to actively participate in the teaching and learning process and surroundings. Additionally, it is advised that teacher education programmes incorporate an emotion module into their pre-service teacher curriculum to help them enhance their emotional intelligence.

Second, if governments, policymakers, and institutional managers prefer to observe teachers actively engaged in their works as teachers, they should look into strategies to increase teacher satisfaction. Teachers' satisfaction may be raised and enhances, which can result in good work engagement and attitudes and better student learning results. They may also improve incentive packages such as salary, safe working conditions, and opportunities for professional development. Teachers, for example, might not notice the link between a steady income and job satisfaction because



their pay may be comparable to those of other professions. Therefore, it is appropriate to view job stability and consistent career chances as driving forces behind the decision to become a teacher.

Furthermore, establishing strong monitoring and assessment systems guarantees that instructional behaviours continue to be effective. Institutions have a dual responsibility to guarantee the learning satisfaction of students and the feelings, emotions, and attitudes of teachers towards their instructional activities. To reinforce teachers' job satisfaction, institutions could, for instance, use interventions that centre on the frequent use of classroom instructional practices like creating thoughtful questions, using various methods of assessment, using multiple modes of instruction, and providing confused students with alternative explanations [18].

## 5. Conclusion

This study was conducted in a limited scope, covering only two cities in China, i.e., Taiyuan and Xuzhou. Thus, the results of this study cannot represent other regions or countries. Second, the sample respondents are university teachers who are teaching in both cities; therefore, the results cannot be generalised to all populations. Third, there is a significant difference between different levels of institutions, for example, high school versus bachelor's degree universities. Hence, future studies should investigate the influence of professional identity, work engagement, emotion, attitudes, and career satisfaction among other levels of institutional teachers. Last, it acknowledges the plausibility of other antecedents that can influence teachers' career satisfaction. Therefore, further studies should consider using additional predictors alongside professional identity, work engagement, emotion, and attitude to predict teachers' career satisfaction.

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