

TEACHING Autonomy and Emotional Functioning as Predictors of Physical Education Teacher Job SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the extent to which autonomy and emotional functioning predict the job satisfaction of junior high school physical education teachers. A descriptive-correlational design was used for a quantitative study focused on private school PE teachers in Bislig City, Surigao del Sur, using complete enumeration. Data were collected using adapted research instruments that were validated by a panel of experts and subjected to reliability testing. The mean, standard deviation, Pearson product-moment correlation, and multiple regression were used for data analysis. Based on the findings, the levels of teaching autonomy, emotional functioning, and job satisfaction were all high. Emotional functioning showed a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction, while teaching autonomy showed an insignificant negative correlation.

KEYWORDS: *Education, teaching autonomy, emotional functioning, job satisfaction, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction refers to the degree of pleasure or happiness an individual derives from their job. This encompasses feelings about the job, relationships with colleagues, and the overall work environment (Rb & Bhavik Atti, 2024). Moreover, schools are doing their best to improve teachers' satisfaction (Okemasisi, 2021). However, various studies have found that teacher job satisfaction is already declining; teachers are dissatisfied and not content with their jobs.

The study conducted in Connecticut highlighted a significant decline in teacher job satisfaction. A survey of more than 1,300 teachers found that the percentage of teachers who reported being highly satisfied with their jobs has dropped considerably, with many indicating a likelihood of leaving the profession for other career opportunities due to dissatisfaction (Will, 2022). The same problem appeared in a study conducted in England, which reported that their counterparts in other countries also experienced lower job satisfaction. This decline reflects significant concerns about the challenges teachers face in their profession, which impacts their willingness to remain in the field, a reflection of lower job satisfaction (Zieger et al., 2018).

Similarly, in the Philippines, a study by Abdulpatta (2024) reveals poor job satisfaction among public school teachers. Teachers' dissatisfaction is worsening. As stated in the study conducted in Davao Oriental, there is a growing concern about increased teacher dissatisfaction, which is quite evident in public schools. The symptoms of widespread discontent among teachers show that educators are frustrated and mentally checked out of their work. This trend of long-term dissatisfaction will adversely affect educator retention and the education system as a whole. Such remarks highlight the urgency with which these issues need to be addressed to foster a positive atmosphere for teachers. (Balunganon, 2024).

Meanwhile, Dilekçi (2022) explores the impact of teaching autonomy on teacher job satisfaction. The findings indicated that satisfaction was higher among teachers who had autonomy in decision-making regarding teaching methods, classroom management, and curriculum design. As illustrated in their data, autonomy positively affects teachers' motivation, engagement, and overall sense of competence, which subsequently leads to increased satisfaction with the work environment. At the same time, Peng et al. (2022) conducted a study demonstrating that teaching autonomy has a direct, positive impact on job satisfaction. Teachers reported freedom and independence in controlling their teaching methods, managing the classroom, and decision-making. A decision made in accordance with an educator's rationale resulted in increased satisfaction, thereby enhancing their performance and commitment to the job.

Additionally, a study reveals that emotional functioning, as measured by an emotional intelligence scale, is a factor that influences job satisfaction among teachers (Anderson, 2021). According to Wijayati et al. (2019), the study reveals that emotional intelligence significantly influences job satisfaction among

female junior high school teachers in Surabaya. These teachers use their emotional intelligence to manage themselves, increasing job satisfaction. Job satisfaction, in turn, boosts their commitment, especially since many women in Indonesia choose teaching as a noble profession.

The present study sought to investigate teaching autonomy and emotional functioning as significant predictors of PE teachers' job satisfaction. Additionally, job satisfaction for PE teachers was expressed in colleagues' satisfaction, parents' satisfaction, and student behavior satisfaction. However, despite considerable research on teacher autonomy, emotional functioning, and job satisfaction in most parts of the world, no studies have been conducted at the local level on these variables, particularly in Bislig City (Grace & Zhu, 2023). Also, the variables utilized by other studies were bivariate. At the same time, the researcher opted to conduct a multivariate study examining teaching autonomy and emotional functioning to determine their correlation with teacher job satisfaction.

Furthermore, such teaching autonomy and emotional functioning might have led to varying effects on job satisfaction among PE teachers due to cultural and institutional factors unique to this region. Similarly, most research focusing on these variables has targeted core subject teachers, with minimal representation of PE teachers. This study aimed to fill these gaps and examine how teaching autonomy and emotional functioning influence job satisfaction among junior high school PE teachers in Bislig City.

In addition, this was socially relevant research, as efforts to improve teachers' welfare translated into better educational experiences for their students. The study analyzed the factors influencing the job satisfaction of PE teachers in Bislig City, aiming to offer insights for developing improved policies and practices that foster a more supportive work environment. It also contributed significantly to the mutual benefit of teachers and students by creating a better educational ecology and improving physical education performance.

The findings of this study were shared and cascaded to educational institutions, particularly schools, and to organizations focused on teacher welfare and professional development, serving as a benchmark for improvement and a guide for developing strategies to enhance job satisfaction among PE teachers. Congruently, with the ongoing shifts in the educational system and the evolving needs of teachers and students, the study's findings were disseminated through

school in-service training to enlighten administrators and faculty members to develop professional development programs for physical education teachers. The study's results served as a valuable resource for educational administrators, highlighting the importance of fostering teacher autonomy and emotional functioning to improve teacher satisfaction and, ultimately, student outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

1. What is the level of teaching autonomy, emotional functioning, and job satisfaction of the respondents?
2. Is there a significant relationship between teaching autonomy and job satisfaction; and emotional functioning and job satisfaction?
3. Do teaching autonomy and emotional functioning significantly influence job satisfaction of the respondents?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. In this quantitative research, a descriptive-correlational design was used to investigate the relationships among teaching autonomy, emotional functioning, and job satisfaction of secondary physical education instructors. This approach, according to Bryman (2012), was particularly useful for studying complex phenomena, such as how teaching autonomy and emotional functioning are related to teacher job satisfaction, by providing measurable data that could be statistically analyzed.

The descriptive component provided an accurate account of the current status and characteristics of physical education teachers with respect to these variables, while the correlational component enabled the researcher to examine how these variables are interrelated.

Research Locale. This research was conducted in the city of Bislig, a second-class city located in the eastern part of Surigao del Sur, Mindanao. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2020), Bislig City had a population of around 99,290. The city is also known for its coastal areas and natural tourist attractions, such as the famous Tinuy-an Falls. The economy of Bislig City is fairly vibrant, and, like many other cities, it has a strong educational infrastructure with both private and public institutions.

Research Respondents. The respondents of this study were the 46 junior high school physical education teachers from five private secondary schools in

Bislig City, Surigao del Sur. They represented the overall population of PE teachers within the private school sector in the locality and broadly within the province. Given the small population size, complete enumeration was used as the sampling method. This approach was deemed appropriate and reliable, as it enabled the inclusion of the entire group, ensuring comprehensive and representative data collection for the study.

Research Instrument. The main instrument used in this study is a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire had been checked by the adviser and validated by experts. The General Teaching Autonomy questionnaire was adapted from Pearson and Hall (1993), which focused on control over classroom management, assessment methods, and scheduling, thereby reflecting day-to-day instructional decision-making. The reported Cronbach's alpha for TAS was 0.83, indicating good reliability and internal consistency. In answering the survey questionnaire, the respondents used a Likert-type scale, with 1 as the lowest (strongly disagree) and 5 as the highest (strongly agree).

The Scale of Emotional Functioning: Educators (SEF), designed by McCallum and Kirkpatrick in 2019, was used to assess the emotional functioning of physical education teachers. This scale measured three critical dimensions: emotional awareness, emotional management, and interpersonal relations, which ascertained how teachers handled their emotions and interacted with both students and colleagues. Furthermore, the reliability of this measuring instrument was said to be good, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85 for the SEF. The items in the questionnaire were answered using 5-Likert-type levels, with 1 as the lowest (strongly disagree) and 5 as the highest (strongly agree).

Meanwhile, teacher job satisfaction was measured using the TJSS-9, developed by Pepe in 2011. This scale comprised three dimensions: colleague satisfaction, parent satisfaction, and student behavior satisfaction. This further supported the appropriateness of the instrument for measuring the complex nature of job satisfaction among teachers, as the TJSS-9 was found to be internally reliable (Cronbach's alpha = 0.90). Taken together, these instruments provided a robust framework within which to examine relationships between the variables under study, ensuring both reliability and validity in the measurement of key constructs. The instruments used a Likert scaling technique on a 5-point scale, identifying five as the highest and one as the lowest.

Statistical Tools. Data collected from questionnaires on perceived

teaching autonomy, teacher job satisfaction, and emotional functioning were analyzed using various statistical methods in the research. These are Mean, Standard Deviation, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation, Multiple Linear Regression, and Regression Assumption and Diagnostics

Ethical Considerations. This study was submitted to the University of the Immaculate Conception-Ethics Review Committee (UIC-REC) for review to ensure that its conduct was in accordance with the proper protocol. The Ethics and Research Board focused primarily on upholding the research protocol by protecting the validity of the data and the dignity of the people involved in this study. The quality of this research project was based on the researchers' ability to present valid arguments to readers and to present data fairly. Ethical standards in research avoid the fabrication and falsification of data. It enabled the pursuit of knowledge and truth to be the primary goal of this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter covers the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data in accordance with the sequence of specific questions in Chapter 1.

Levels of Teaching Autonomy, Emotional Functioning, and Job Satisfaction of Physical Education Teachers

The overall level of teaching autonomy of physical education teachers is 3.83, which is described as high, indicating that teaching autonomy is often evident. The result implies that most respondents feel they have sufficient independence in making instructional and curricular decisions in their teaching practice. In addition, the overall standard deviation is 0.65, which is less than 1, indicating that the respondents' ratings are clustered around the mean.

Table 1.1
Levels of Teaching Autonomy, Emotional Functioning, and Job Satisfaction of Physical Education Teachers

Variables	Mean	SD	Description
Teaching Autonomy	3.83	0.65	High
Emotional Functioning	3.92	0.46	High
Job Satisfaction	3.89	0.61	High

This finding supports the study by Banville et al. (2021), which revealed

that physical education teachers perceive considerable autonomy, specifically in selecting instructional activities and making curriculum-related decisions at the departmental level. Moreover, Chen et al. (2017) reinforced this by noting that PE teachers' autonomy in curricular decision-making is closely linked to their personal educational beliefs, thereby highlighting teachers' perceptions of sufficient independence when implementing instructional practices.

Boser and Hanna (2014), drawing from the 2011–2012 School and Staffing Survey, reported that a significant number of U.S. teachers experienced high levels of professional autonomy, especially in planning instruction, choosing teaching methods, setting lesson content, selecting evaluation tools, and managing discipline. This aligns with the Learning Policy Institute (2018), which found that 76% of surveyed teachers were satisfied with their classroom autonomy, and the Institute of Education Sciences (2018), which noted that over 82% felt in control of core instructional decisions such as lesson planning and material selection. Likewise, Harmening (2021) found that most early elementary teachers in her qualitative study reported strong autonomy in daily instructional and curricular decisions. They described being able to adapt lesson pacing, design content, and implement strategies suited to their students' needs. This autonomy was strongly reinforced by collegial relationships and a school culture that valued their expertise, with the theme of “Teacher Agency” highlighting how professional respect and relational trust enhanced teachers’ confidence and motivation in making independent instructional choices.

The level of emotional functioning of physical education teachers is presented. An overall mean of 3.92, described as high, is reported, indicating that emotional functioning in physical education teachers is often manifested. Additionally, the overall standard deviation is 0.46, which is less than 1, suggesting that the ratings are clustered near the mean. The result indicates that teachers are generally capable of managing their own emotions and relating to others effectively, and maintaining emotional stability in professional settings.

Table 1.2
Level of Emotional Functioning of Physical Education Teachers

Variables	Mean	SD	Description
<i>Emotional Awareness</i>	4.02	.48	High
<i>Emotional Management</i>	3.90	.46	High
Overall Mean	3.92	.46	High

The finding affirms the view of Rahman et al. (2024), who emphasized that emotionally intelligent teachers are more likely to manage stress effectively and experience greater job satisfaction. Likewise, the finding supports the view of Kgosiemang and Khoza (2022), who emphasized that teachers with high levels of emotional intelligence are better able to manage their emotions and build positive relationships with students and colleagues, core aspects that reflect emotional stability and interpersonal effectiveness in professional settings.

The overall mean of job satisfaction of physical education teachers is 3.89. It is described as high, indicating that job satisfaction among physical education teachers is consistently high. The overall standard deviation is 0.61, suggesting that respondents' responses are closer to the mean. This result means that teachers derive satisfaction from their professional roles and work environments, especially in terms of colleague relationships, student discipline, and parental engagement. Also, this finding implies that most PE teachers are content with their current teaching context and feel fulfilled in their roles.

Table 1.3
Level of Job Satisfaction of Physical Education Teachers

Variables	Mean	SD	Description
Colleague Satisfaction	3.91	.69	High
Student Behavior Satisfaction	3.96	.69	High
Parent Satisfaction	3.81	.77	High
Overall Mean	3.92	.46	High

This finding supports the study by Noor et al. (2024), who noted that private school teachers tend to report high levels of job satisfaction, especially in aspects related to work responsibilities and interpersonal relationships. Likewise, findings align with those of Yüceloglu Keskin and Bayram (2020), who found that PE teachers demonstrated consistently high levels of job satisfaction across various demographics, citing strong contentment with their teaching careers. This was attributed to meaningful student interactions, autonomy in instruction, and recognition from school leaders, which together contributed to their sense of fulfillment and professional well-being.

**Significance of the Relationship of Teaching Autonomy,
Emotional Functioning, and Job Satisfaction**

Results revealed a weak negative relationship between teaching autonomy and job satisfaction ($r = -0.30$). However, the relationship is not

statistically significant ($p=0.067$, (two-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$). This indicates that, in this sample, higher teaching autonomy is not reliably associated with higher or lower job satisfaction.

Table 2
*Significance of the Relationship of Teaching Autonomy,
Emotional Functioning, and Job Satisfaction*

	r	p-value	Remarks
<i>Teaching Autonomy and Job Satisfaction</i>	-.30	.067	Not Significant
<i>Emotional Functioning and Job Satisfaction</i>	.42	.008	Significant

The finding is in contrast to the studies of Oduro et al. (2024) and Areola & Galang (2023), which indicated that teaching autonomy positively influences job satisfaction; however, it aligns with Worth and Van Den Brande (2020), who found that lower autonomy in professionally defined goals was linked to greater job satisfaction among teachers, suggesting that the role of autonomy in job satisfaction may depend significantly on contextual factors.

Consequently, emotional functioning shows a significant, moderate positive relationship with job satisfaction ($r = .42$, $p < .05$). This suggests that as emotional functioning increases, job satisfaction increases. This result implies that emotionally functioning PE teachers tend to derive greater satisfaction from their work, underscoring the role of emotional awareness and management in enhancing their experience.

This finding supports the study by Mylonakis et al. (2024), which found a strong positive correlation between emotional functioning and job satisfaction among employees, suggesting that those with enhanced emotional capacity report greater job satisfaction. It also aligns with the findings of García del Castillo-López and Pérez Domínguez (2024), who emphasized that emotional functioning improves job satisfaction both directly and indirectly by fostering a more supportive work environment and reducing stress. Likewise, Abu Bakar and Nordin (2024) found that teachers with stronger emotional functioning demonstrated greater job satisfaction, particularly in demanding teaching contexts.

**Significance of the Influence of Teaching Autonomy
and Emotional Functioning on Job Satisfaction**

In the regression model, teaching autonomy was not a significant predictor of job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.16$, $p = 0.32$). Emotional functioning was a substantial positive predictor of job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.36$, $p = 0.04$). Interpreting standardized coefficients: a 1 standard deviation increase in emotional functioning is associated with an estimated 0.36 standard deviation increase in job satisfaction, controlling for teaching autonomy. The model explained approximately 20% of the variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.20$), indicating that additional factors beyond those included in this study likely contribute to teachers' job satisfaction.

Table 3
Level of Job Satisfaction of Physical Education Teachers

Singular Influence of the Predictors		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value	Remarks
Teaching Autonomy		-0.16	-1.00	.32	Not Significant
Emotional Functioning		0.36	2.20	.04	Significant
Combined Influence of the Predictors					
R	.45				
R ²	.20				
F	4.39				
P	.02				Significant

This aligns with Klassen et al.'s (2012) finding that job satisfaction among teachers is influenced by multiple interacting personal and organizational factors, including collective efficacy, workload demands, and institutional support.

Further, this finding aligns with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Deci and Ryan (2000), which posits that satisfaction and optimal functioning are achieved when the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met. In this study, emotional functioning, which significantly influences job satisfaction, reflects the fulfillment of the needs for competence and relatedness. When PE teachers can recognize, regulate, and manage emotions effectively, they feel more competent in handling classroom demands and more connected to their students and colleagues. This emotional competence

fosters intrinsic motivation and contributes positively to their job satisfaction, aligning with SDT's assertion that satisfaction arises when individuals feel capable and socially integrated.

This study is limited by its cross-sectional design, which does not allow for causal or temporal ordering conclusions among variables. The sample was drawn through complete enumeration of private school PE teachers in Bislig City, which may limit the generalizability to public school contexts or other localities. All variables were measured using self-report instruments, which may introduce common-method bias and social desirability effects. Future research may test expanded models including organizational climate, administrative support, workload compensation, and professional development opportunities, and may consider multi-site sampling and longitudinal designs.

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