

The Mediating Role of Working Environment on the Relationship between Self-Determination and Job Satisfaction of Teachers in Trento District

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to determine the levels of self-determination, job satisfaction, and working environment among public school teachers in the Trento District. It further explored the significant relationship between self-determination and working environment, working environment and job satisfaction, and self-determination with job satisfaction. Ultimately, this study has a mediation analysis of the work environment to link self-determination theory with job satisfaction. The study used a quantitative, non-experimental research design that uses a descriptive correlation method without seeking to determine causal relationships. Data was collected from surveys and analyzed to determine correlations and mediation effects. The results indicated that teachers scored a moderate level of self-determination and satisfaction with work, while a positive perception of the working environment was evident. Positive correlations were identified between self-determination and working environment, working environment and job satisfaction, as well as self-determination with job satisfaction. This study contributes to the knowledge of self-determination theory with the working environment and job satisfaction of teachers. The findings have implications for policymakers and educational administrators by revealing how teacher satisfaction at the workplace shapes teachers to feel that their daily workloads are more manageable, while the effect is partially mediated by the working environment.

Keywords: Self-determination; Working Environment; Job Satisfaction of Teachers; Mediation Analysis

INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, teachers stand as the cornerstone of academic success and student development. However, beneath the surface of this noble profession lies a growing concern that threatens the very foundation of our educational systems. Recent years have witnessed a troubling decline in job satisfaction among teachers worldwide, with alarming consequences for both educators and the students they serve (Madigan & Kim, 2021). From increased stress levels and burnout to rising attrition rates, the challenges facing teachers have reached a critical juncture, demanding urgent attention and innovative solutions.

The problem of diminishing teacher job satisfaction is multifaceted and complex. Educators today grapple with a myriad of issues, including overwhelming workloads, limited autonomy, inadequate support systems, and a lack of recognition for their efforts. These factors contribute to a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction that not only affects teachers' well-being but also impacts the quality of education provided to students (Collie & Martin, 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges, introducing new stressors and highlighting the critical need for supportive work environments (Kim et al., 2022).

Despite the wealth of research on job satisfaction in various professions, there remains a significant gap in our

understanding of the specific factors that influence teacher job satisfaction, particularly in the context of local educational systems like the Trento District. While studies have explored various aspects of teacher well-being, the interplay between self-determination, working environment, and job satisfaction among public school teachers remains underexplored (Aldrup et al., 2017). This gap in knowledge hinders our ability to develop targeted interventions and support systems that could effectively enhance teacher satisfaction and retention.

The relevance of addressing teacher job satisfaction cannot be overstated. Satisfied teachers are more likely to be engaged, committed, and effective in their roles, directly impacting student achievement and overall school performance (Toropova et al., 2021). Moreover, in an era where teacher shortages are becoming increasingly prevalent, understanding and improving job satisfaction is crucial for attracting and retaining high-quality educators (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018).

The urgency of this research is underscored by the rapidly changing educational landscape and the long-term implications of teacher dissatisfaction. As schools grapple with the aftermath of the pandemic and face new challenges in education delivery, the need for a conducive organizational culture for learning excellence (Nazareno et al., 2024), a motivated and satisfied teaching workforce has never been more critical (Pressley, 2021). Addressing these issues now is essential to prevent a potential crisis in education quality and teacher retention.

In light of these pressing concerns, this study aims to investigate the complex interplay between self-determination, working environment, and job satisfaction among public school teachers in Trento District, with a particular focus on the mediating role of the working environment. Specifically, the objectives of this research are:

1. To determine the level of self-determination among public school teachers in Trento District
2. To describe the level of job satisfaction among public school teachers in Trento District
3. To assess the quality of the working environment of public school teachers in Trento District
4. To examine the relationships between self-determination, working environment, and job satisfaction among public school teachers in Trento District
5. To determine the significant mediating effect of the working environment on the relationship between self-determination and teacher job satisfaction in Trento District

This study is anchored in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a comprehensive framework that offers valuable insights into human motivation and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT posits that individuals have three innate psychological needs - autonomy, competence, and relatedness - which, when satisfied, lead to enhanced motivation and well-being. By applying SDT to the context of teacher job satisfaction, this study aims to uncover the underlying mechanisms that drive teacher motivation and satisfaction, potentially revealing new pathways for supporting and empowering educators in their vital role (Stupnisky et al., 2018).

Through this comprehensive exploration, the researchers seek to contribute not only to the academic discourse on teacher well-being but also to provide practical, actionable insights that can inform policy and practice in the Trento District and beyond. By addressing the critical issues of teacher job satisfaction through the lens of self-determination and working environment, this research aspires to pave the way for more supportive, fulfilling, and effective educational ecosystems that benefit teachers and students alike.

Conceptual Framework

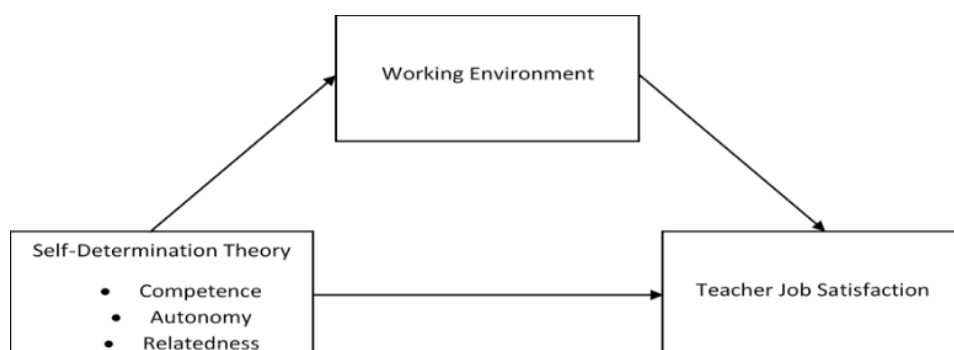


Fig. 1: Level of Job Satisfaction among Public School Teachers of Trento District

METHOD

The study employed a quantitative, non-experimental research design using the descriptive-correlation technique to examine the relationships between self-determination theory, working environment, and teacher job satisfaction (Bahtilla & Hui, 2021; Thekedam, 2010; Ker et al., 2022). The descriptive-correlational approach allowed for the exploration of these relationships without establishing a causal link, providing valuable insights into the underlying mechanisms that contribute to teacher job satisfaction (Thekedam, 2010). Mediation analysis was utilized to assess the mediating role of the working environment, which aimed to fill a gap in the existing literature and contribute to the growing body of research on factors influencing teacher job satisfaction (Anastasiou et al., 2021.; Zhao & Jeon, 2023; Han et al., 2020). The selected research designs were appropriate for the study's objective of determining the mediating effect of the working environment on the relationship between self-determination theory and teacher job satisfaction.

The study was conducted in Trento District, Agusan del Sur, located in the Caraga Region of Mindanao, Philippines. Trento, a first-class municipality in Agusan del Sur, covers a land area of 555.7 square kilometres (214.6 sq mi), constituting 5.56% of the province's total area, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority. The Trento District, with a total area of approximately 43,448 hectares, encompasses nine public secondary schools: Cebolin NHS, Kapatungan NHS, Salvacion NHS, San Isidro NHS, San Roque NHS, Sta. Maria NHS, Manat NHS, Pulanglupa NHS, and Trento NHS. These educational institutions serve the community's needs in Trento and its surrounding areas, providing a comprehensive network of secondary education within the municipality's geographical boundaries.

The study involved 271 teachers from secondary schools in the Trento District of Trento, Agusan del Sur, who were teaching during the 2023-2024 academic year. The total population technique was employed, ensuring that each population case had an equal probability of participation (Taherdoost, 2016). This approach is typically used when the number of studies is minimal (Etikan et al., 2016). The respondents were asked to complete a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, and their participation was voluntary and confidential. They were free to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

There were three sets of adapted survey questionnaires from the different authors of this study. The first set of questionnaires used was the Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction Scale (BPNSS), designed to assess self-determination and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné, 2003). It contained 21 items to measure the following three indicators of self-determination: These were professional values (nos. 1–7), autonomy (nos. 8–13), competence (nos. 14–21), and relatedness. The following scales helped to interpret the data:

Score	Interval	Level	Description
1	1.00 – 1.80	Very Low	Not Self-determined
2	1.81 – 2.60	Low	Less Self-determined
3	2.61 – 3.40	Moderate	Moderately Self-determined
4	3.41 – 4.20	High	Highly Self-determined
5	4.21 – 5.00	Very High	Very Self-determined

The second set of questionnaires was adopted from the Teacher Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (TJSQ) (Lester, 1987). It contained 77 items to measure the nine factors affecting teacher job satisfaction. The nine factors are: 14 items on supervision (nos. 1–13) and 10 items on colleagues (nos. 14–23); seven items on working conditions (nos. 24–30); seven items on pay (nos. 31–37); eight items on responsibility (nos. 38–45); nine items on work itself (nos. 46–54); five items on advancement (nos. 55–59); three items on security (nos. 60–62); and three items on recognition (nos. 63–65). The Cronbach reliability result was 0.970 and was considered excellent. The following scales helped to interpret the data:

Score	Interval	Level	Level
1	1.00 – 1.80	Very Low	Not Satisfied
2	1.81 – 2.60	Low	Less Satisfied
3	2.61 – 3.40	Moderate	Moderately Satisfied
4	3.41 – 4.20	High	Satisfied
5	4.21 – 5.00	Very High	Very Satisfied

The last set of questionnaires is based on Gomez and Tantiado's (2022) Work Environment and Job Satisfaction for Teachers (WEJST). It contained 23 items to test the three factors of the work environment. These were work environment factors (nos. 1–10), role clarity (nos. 11–16), and teamwork (nos. 17–23). Socio-emotional. Each item of the three sets of questionnaires follows a 5-point Likert scale from very high (score = 5) to very low (score = 1). The following scales helped to interpret the data:

Score	Interval	Level	Description
1	1.00 – 1.80	Very Low	Not Favorable Working Environment
2	1.81 – 2.60	Low	Less Favorable Working Environment
3	2.61 – 3.40	Moderate	Fair Working Environment
4	3.41 – 4.20	High	Good Working Environment
5	4.21 – 5.00	Very High	Very Good Working Environment

The data collection process for this study involved adapting survey questionnaires, obtaining approvals, requesting permission from school heads, administering surveys, tallying data, analyzing data, and interpreting findings meticulously. Initially, the researchers adapted survey questionnaires from existing research studies relevant to the constructs of self-determination theory, working environment, and teacher job satisfaction. These questionnaires were then submitted to the researchers' adviser for approval, guaranteeing their validity and appropriateness for the study's objectives. Once approved, formal letters were sent to the school heads of the Trento District, requesting permission to conduct the research within their schools. Upon receiving authorization, the researchers personally visited each school within the district to administer the survey questionnaires to teachers. As the questionnaires were completed and returned, the researchers immediately tallied the data to maintain accuracy and organization. Following the data collection phase, the researchers subjected the acquired data to thorough analysis using appropriate statistical techniques, aligning with the study's objectives. The analyzed data were carefully interpreted to derive meaningful insights into the relationships between self-determination theory, the working environment, and teacher job satisfaction. Finally, based on these findings, the researchers formulated conclusions and recommendations. Data collection was conducted from March 11–15, 2024.

This study employed a comprehensive set of statistical tools to analyze the relationships between school culture elements, teacher spirituality, and workplace spirituality. The mean was utilized to characterize the levels of these variables, while Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) assessed the significance of their relationships. Linear regression analysis determined the degree of influence that school culture elements and teacher spirituality exerted on workplace spirituality. To investigate the mediating effect of workplace spirituality on the relationship between school culture elements and teacher spirituality, the Sobel z -test was applied using Medgraph. This

rigorous statistical approach ensured a thorough examination of the interplay between these critical factors in the educational environment, providing insights suitable for publication in Scopus-indexed journals.

In this study, a rigorous adherence to ethical considerations was implemented to uphold research integrity and respect for participants. Voluntary participation was ensured, with all teachers invited to partake without coercion, reflecting principles of autonomy and consent (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Participants were provided with comprehensive information regarding the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks, enabling informed consent (Israel & Hay, 2006). Privacy and confidentiality were maintained by securely handling personal information and anonymizing data in the study's findings (Kaiser, 2020).

The study also adhered to principles of academic integrity. All sources were cited appropriately to prevent plagiarism, and data were reported accurately to avoid fabrication or falsification (Baker, 2016; Mertens, 2018). Potential conflicts of interest were disclosed to ensure impartiality and objectivity in the research process (Macfarlane, 2017). Transparent recruitment and the procurement of necessary permissions from relevant authorities, such as school heads in the Trento district, were integral to the study's ethical approach (Wiles, 2013). Additionally, the study's dissemination was managed to ensure that only authorized personnel published or presented the findings, respecting both academic standards and organizational policies (Stern, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Level of Self-Determination of Public School Teachers of Trento District

Table 1 presents the level of self-determination among public school teachers in the Trento District, revealing a moderate level with a mean of 3.26. The relatively low standard deviation of 0.21 indicates that respondents' perceptions of self-determination are tightly clustered around this mean. This suggests that most public school teachers in the Trento district have a moderately positive perception of their self-determination, generally experiencing a sense of autonomy, competence, and connection to their work. These results provide a clear snapshot of the current state of self-determination among educators in the district, offering a foundation for further analysis and potential interventions.

Table 1: Level of Self-Determination among Public School Teachers of Trento District

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
Self Determination	3.26	0.31	Moderate

The moderate level of self-determination observed among Trento district teachers aligns with the importance of this construct in educational settings. Thompson (2019) describes self-determination theory as the feeling of being motivated or self-determined when a person's actions exceed their expectations in meeting basic needs. This underscores the significance of the observed results, as they indicate that teachers in the district are experiencing a moderate degree of motivation and self-determination in their professional roles. Furthermore, Rahayu et al. (2022) emphasize the need for teachers to develop their self-determination, asserting that it is key to mastering essential abilities such as providing feedback and recognizing students. The moderate level of self-determination found in this study suggests that while teachers in the Trento district have a foundation of self-determination, there may be room for enhancement to fully realize these benefits and improve their connections with students.

B. Level of Job Satisfaction among Public School Teachers of Trento District

Table 2 presents the level of job satisfaction among public school teachers in the Trento District, revealing a moderate level with a mean of 3.37 and a standard deviation of 0.24. This relatively low standard deviation indicates that respondents' perceptions of job satisfaction are consistently clustered around the mean. These results suggest that public school teachers in the Trento district have mixed feelings about their jobs, experiencing both positive and negative aspects. While there are elements of their work that they find fulfilling or enjoyable, there may also be areas of dissatisfaction or opportunities for improvement. This nuanced picture

provides valuable insights into the current state of job satisfaction among educators in the district.

Table 2: Level of Job Satisfaction among Public School Teachers of Trento District

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Job Satisfaction	3.37	0.24	Moderate

The moderate level of job satisfaction observed among Trento district teachers aligns with current research on teacher job satisfaction. Özkan and Akgenç (2022) define teachers' job satisfaction as their emotional response to their teaching roles, highlighting the complexity of this construct. Their research, along with that of Shrestha (2019), identifies several factors influencing teacher job satisfaction, including age, gender, career preferences, and participation in professional development activities. For instance, younger teachers may experience lower job satisfaction due to concerns about their future careers, while female teachers often report higher satisfaction, potentially due to socio-cultural beliefs about the suitability of women for the teaching profession. Additionally, teachers who chose teaching as their first career option tend to exhibit higher job satisfaction and passion for their work. The moderate level of job satisfaction found in this study suggests that while teachers in the Trento district find some aspects of their work satisfying, there may be room for targeted interventions to address specific areas of concern and enhance overall job satisfaction.

C. Level of The Working Environment of Public School Teachers of Trento District

Table 3 presents the level of working environment among public school teachers in the Trento District, revealing a very high level with a mean of 4.29. The standard deviation of 0.65 indicates a moderate amount of variability in teachers' perceptions of their working environment. This suggests that while the overall perception is highly positive, there is diversity in opinions among teachers. The results imply that most public school teachers in the Trento district view their working environment favorably, although some may have mixed or opposing views. This comprehensive picture provides valuable insights into the current state of the working environment for educators in the district, highlighting both strengths and potential areas for improvement.

Table 3: Level of Working Environment among Public School Teachers of Trento District

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
Working Environment	4.29	0.65	Very High

The very high level of perceived working environment quality among Trento district teachers aligns with current research on conducive workplace conditions in educational settings. Masoom (2021) identifies key components of a positive work environment, including organizational encouragement, supervisory encouragement, and workgroup support. These factors contribute to the overall positive perception observed in this study. Additionally, Wilson et al. (2020) emphasize the role of collective efficacy in shaping teachers' perceptions of their working environment. However, the moderate variability in responses suggests the presence of some challenges. Masoom (2021) also notes toxic conditions that can negatively impact teachers' views, such as teaching impediments (e.g., dealing with disruptive students) and workload pressures (e.g., excessive meetings and unreasonable deadlines). The high mean score, coupled with the moderate standard deviation, indicates that while the Trento district has successfully created a generally positive working environment, there may be opportunities to address specific concerns and further enhance the experience for all teachers.

D. Relationship between Self Determination and Working Environment of Public School Teachers of Trento district

Table 4.1 presents the relationship between self-determination and working environment among public school teachers in the Trento District, as analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient. The results reveal a weak

positive relationship ($r = 0.129$) between the two variables, with a statistically significant p-value of 0.047. This indicates that as teachers' self-determination increases, their perception of the working environment tends to improve, albeit to a small degree. The weak but significant correlation suggests that teachers who feel more autonomous, competent, and connected to their work are somewhat more likely to view their working environment favorably. These findings provide insights into the interplay between personal psychological factors and environmental perceptions among educators in the district.

Table 4.1. Significant Relationship between Self-Determination and Working Environment using Pearson-r Correlation.

Variable	p-value	r-value	Remarks
Self Determination and Working Environment	0.047	0.129	Significant (weak positive relationship)

The observed relationship between self-determination and perceived working environment aligns with current research on workplace dynamics in educational settings. Guo (2023) emphasizes the critical role of self-determination in affecting organizational productivity and culture, a finding that resonates with the present study's results. Furthermore, Gagné et al. (2022) applied self-determination theory to workplace contexts, highlighting the importance of satisfying three psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Their research demonstrated that fulfilling these needs can enhance performance, organizational commitment, and reduce burnout and turnover. The weak positive correlation found in this study suggests that while self-determination does influence teachers' perceptions of their working environment in the Trento district, other factors likely play significant roles as well. This understanding provides a foundation for developing targeted interventions to enhance both self-determination and working environment perceptions among teachers, potentially leading to improved job satisfaction and performance outcomes.

E. Relationship between Working Environment and Job Satisfaction of Public School Teachers of Trento District

Table 4.2 presents the relationship between working environment and job satisfaction among public school teachers in the Trento District, as analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient. The results reveal a weak positive relationship ($r = 0.191$) between the two variables, with a statistically significant p-value of 0.000. This indicates that as teachers' perception of their working environment improves, their job satisfaction tends to increase, albeit to a small degree. The weak but significant correlation suggests that while the working environment does influence job satisfaction, other factors likely play substantial roles as well. These findings provide insights into the complex interplay between environmental factors and job satisfaction among educators in the district.

Table 4.2. Significant Relationship between Working Environment and Teacher Job Satisfaction using Pearson-r Correlation.

Variable	p-value	r-value	Remarks
Self Determination and Teacher Job Satisfaction	0.000	0.191	Significant (weak positive relationship)

The observed relationship between working environment and job satisfaction aligns with current research on workplace dynamics in educational settings. Onlos (2021) identified several factors affecting teachers' job satisfaction, including the working environment, employment stability, colleagues, and the nature of the work itself. Their study revealed that teachers' well-being, which encompasses these environmental factors, can predict job satisfaction levels. Similarly, Dreer (2021) emphasized the importance of maintaining a positive working environment in enhancing teachers' well-being and retention, particularly in the context of global educator

shortages. The weak positive correlation found in this study supports these findings, suggesting that improvements in the working environment may contribute modestly to enhancing teacher job satisfaction in the Trento district. This understanding provides a foundation for developing targeted interventions to enhance both the working environment and job satisfaction among teachers, potentially leading to improved well-being, performance outcomes, and retention rates. However, the weak correlation also implies that comprehensive approaches addressing multiple factors beyond just the working environment may be necessary to significantly boost job satisfaction.

F. Relationship between Self Determination and Job Satisfaction of Public School Teachers of Trento District

Table 4.3 presents the relationship between self-determination and job satisfaction among public school teachers in the Trento District, as analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient. The results reveal a weak positive relationship ($r = 0.265$) between the two variables, with a statistically significant p-value of 0.000. This indicates that as teachers' self-determination increases, their job satisfaction tends to improve, albeit to a moderate degree. The weak but significant correlation suggests that teachers who feel more self-determined are somewhat more likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction. These findings provide insights into the interplay between personal psychological factors and job satisfaction among educators in the district.

Table 4.3. Significant Relationship between Self Determination and Teacher Job Satisfaction using Pearson-r Correlation

Variable	p-value	r-value	Remarks
Self Determination and Teacher Job Satisfaction	0.000	0.265	Significant (weak positive relationship)

The observed relationship between self-determination and job satisfaction aligns with current research on workplace dynamics in educational settings. Forner et al. (2020) applied self-determination theory to assess workers' job satisfaction levels, finding that satisfying basic psychological needs can increase job satisfaction. This supports the present study's results, suggesting that enhancing teachers' self-determination may contribute to improved job satisfaction. Similarly, Maqsood et al. (2022) found a positive relationship between self-determination and job satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of autonomy at work. Their research suggests that increased autonomy can boost teachers' self-determination, leading to improved performance and higher job satisfaction. The weak positive correlation found in this study corroborates these findings, indicating that efforts to enhance teachers' self-determination in the Trento district may yield modest improvements in job satisfaction. However, the relatively weak correlation also implies that other factors likely play significant roles in determining overall job satisfaction, suggesting that comprehensive approaches addressing multiple aspects of teachers' work experiences may be necessary to substantially boost job satisfaction levels.

G. The mediating effect of the working environment on the relationship between self-determination and job satisfaction of public school teachers in Trento District

Table 5 presents the regression results for the mediating effect of the working environment on the relationship between self-determination and job satisfaction among public school teachers in the Trento District. The analysis follows a four-step process:

Step 1 reveals a significant direct effect of self-determination on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.265, p = 0.000$). Step 2 shows that self-determination significantly predicts the working environment ($\beta = 0.129, p = 0.047$). Steps 3 and 4 employ multiple linear regression, demonstrating that the working environment significantly predicts job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.159, p = 0.000$) while controlling for self-determination. Notably, the effect of self-determination on job satisfaction remains significant but slightly reduced ($\beta = 0.244, p = 0.000$) when the working environment is included as a mediator.

Further mediation analysis using the Sobel Z-test yielded a z-value of 1.587 ($p = 0.01$), which is below the critical value for significance at the 95% confidence level. The computed Ratio Index indicates that only 7.81% of the total effect of self-determination on job satisfaction is mediated by the working environment.

Table 5. Regression Result of the Variables in Four Criteria.

Step	Path	Direction of Path	Unstandardized Beta	Standard Error	Standardized Beta	p-value	Remarks
1	c	$X \rightarrow Y$	0.209	0.049	0.265	0.000	Significant
2	a	$X \rightarrow M$	0.272	0.136	0.129	0.047	Significant
3	b	$M \rightarrow Y$	0.060	0.023	0.159	0.000	Significant
4	c'	$X \rightarrow Y$ (with mediator, M)	0.192	0.049	0.244	0.000	Significant

The results suggest a complex interplay between self-determination, working environment, and job satisfaction among public school teachers in the Trento District. The significant direct effect of self-determination on job satisfaction aligns with self-determination theory, indicating that teachers who feel more autonomous, competent, and connected to their work tend to experience higher job satisfaction.

The weak but significant relationship between self-determination and the working environment suggests that teachers with higher self-determination may perceive their work environment more positively. This could be due to their increased sense of agency and competence, allowing them to navigate and potentially shape their work environment more effectively.

The partial mediation observed in the analysis indicates that while the working environment plays a role in the relationship between self-determination and job satisfaction, it is not the primary mechanism through which self-determination influences job satisfaction. The relatively low Ratio Index (7.81%) further supports this interpretation, suggesting that other factors may have a more substantial impact on the relationship between self-determination and job satisfaction.

These findings are consistent with recent research in the field. Venkatesh (2022) defined job satisfaction as the positive feelings or attitudes of a worker towards their job, emphasizing its importance as a motivational technique. His study identified organizational factors such as salaries and wages, promotion chances, and company policies as having more impact on job satisfaction than the working environment. Similarly, Işirli and Namal (2023) found that the salary system was the primary factor affecting workers' job satisfaction, with the work environment ranking third in importance.

The non-significant result of the Sobel test, despite the significant individual paths, highlights the complexity of the relationships between these variables. It suggests that while the working environment may play a role in the relationship between self-determination and job satisfaction, its effect may be too small to be detected reliably with this sample size, or there may be other mediating or moderating factors not accounted for in this model.

In conclusion, while the working environment does partially mediate the relationship between self-determination and job satisfaction among public school teachers in the Trento District, its effect is relatively small. This aligns with the findings of Venkatesh (2022) and Işirli and Namal (2023), suggesting that efforts to improve teacher job satisfaction should consider a multifaceted approach, addressing not only the working environment but also other factors such as compensation, professional development opportunities, and organizational policies. Future research could explore additional mediating factors and consider more complex models to better understand the intricate relationships between these variables in educational settings.

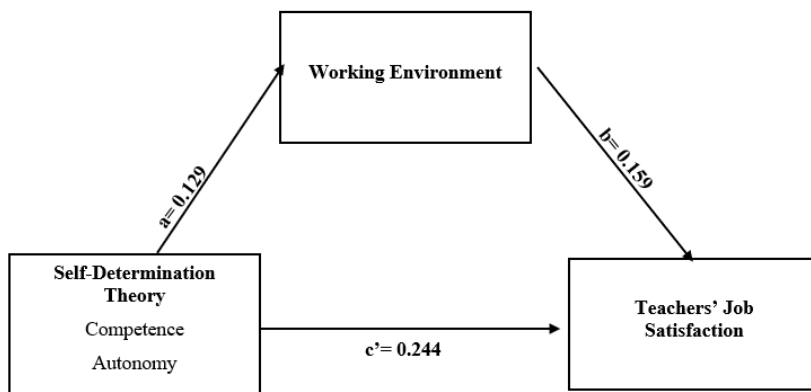


Fig. 2: Medgraph showing the variables of the study

Mediation Analysis

Table 6. Result of the Mediation Analysis

Sobel z-value	1.587,	p-value= 0.112
Percentage of Total effects mediated:	7.81%	
Ratio of indirect to direct	0.085	
Effect size measures		
Unstandardized coefficients		
Total:	0.209	
Direct:	0.192	
Indirect:	0.01632	
Ratio Index	0.078086	

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study investigated the factors influencing job satisfaction, self-determination, and perceptions of the working environment among public school teachers in the Trento district. The findings revealed moderate levels of self-determination (M = 3.26, SD = 0.21) and job satisfaction (M = 3.39, SD = 0.29) among the respondents. Notably, teachers reported a very positive perception of their working environment (M = 4.29, SD = 0.65), indicating a generally favorable workplace atmosphere.

The study also examined the relationships between these variables. A weak positive correlation was found between self-determination and working environment perceptions (r = 0.129), suggesting that higher levels of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are associated with more positive views of the work context. Similarly, weak positive relationships were observed between working environment and job satisfaction (r = 0.191), and between self-determination and job satisfaction (r = 0.256). These findings indicate that while these factors are interconnected, other variables likely play significant roles in determining overall job satisfaction.

The mediating effect analysis revealed that the working environment partially mediates the relationship between self-determination and job satisfaction. The standardized beta coefficient decreased from 0.265 to 0.244 when the working environment was included in the model. The Sobel test further confirmed the partial mediation, suggesting that while the working environment contributes to the relationship between self-determination and

job satisfaction, other factors, such as salaries, promotion potential, and company policies, may have stronger predictive power.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into the complex interplay between self-determination, working environment, and job satisfaction among public school teachers in the Trento District, viewed through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The moderate levels of self-determination and job satisfaction, coupled with the very positive perception of the working environment, suggest that while teachers generally experience some degree of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their work, there remains potential for further nurturing these basic psychological needs to enhance overall job satisfaction. The weak positive correlations between the main variables underscore the multifaceted nature of job satisfaction in educational settings, aligning with SDT's emphasis on the interplay between intrinsic motivation and extrinsic factors. While self-determination (reflecting intrinsic motivation) and a positive working environment (an extrinsic factor) contribute to job satisfaction, they are not the sole determinants. This highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to improving teacher well-being and job satisfaction, one that addresses both intrinsic motivational factors and extrinsic contextual elements.

The study's findings on values, beliefs, and practices (Nazareno et al., 2024) further support SDT's emphasis on internalization processes, whereby external regulations can be integrated into one's sense of self, potentially enhancing autonomous motivation. This underscores the importance of creating an environment that facilitates the internalization of educational values and practices. The partial mediation of the working environment in the relationship between self-determination and job satisfaction aligns with SDT's organismic dialectical perspective, which posits that the social context can either support or thwart the satisfaction of basic psychological needs. It suggests that while improving the working environment can enhance the impact of self-determination on job satisfaction, other organizational factors such as compensation, career advancement opportunities, and institutional policies play crucial roles in shaping teachers' overall job satisfaction and their experience of need satisfaction.

These findings have important implications for educational policy and management, viewed through an SDT lens. They suggest that efforts to enhance teacher job satisfaction should focus on promoting autonomy by involving teachers in decision-making processes and providing choices in curriculum implementation, supporting competence through professional development opportunities and constructive feedback mechanisms, and fostering relatedness by creating a collaborative and supportive school culture. Additionally, addressing broader organizational factors like leadership styles that support basic need satisfaction (Jayson et al., 2024), ensuring organizational justice (Sapayani et al., 2024), and promoting organizational values that align with teachers' intrinsic motivations (Lubguban et al., 2024) is crucial.

This SDT-informed approach could lead to more effective strategies for improving teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and ultimately, the quality of education provided to students. By creating environments that support teachers' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, schools can foster more self-determined forms of motivation, leading to greater job satisfaction and potentially improved educational outcomes. Future research could further explore the specific mechanisms through which SDT constructs interact with organizational factors in educational settings, providing a more nuanced understanding of how to create optimal conditions for teacher motivation and satisfaction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, the researchers recommend a multi-faceted approach to enhancing teacher job satisfaction in the Trento District. This approach may include regular assessments of teacher satisfaction to identify specific areas of concern and develop targeted interventions. Implementing mentorship programs could address the unique challenges faced by novice teachers and provide valuable support for their professional development.

To promote self-determination, the researchers suggest increasing teacher involvement in decision-making

processes and providing opportunities for individualized teaching approaches. This could be complemented by continuous professional development programs that enhance teachers' sense of competence and relatedness.

Addressing the working environment should involve reinforcing positive aspects such as supervisory support while mitigating negative factors like workload pressure and student behavior management challenges. Additionally, developing comprehensive retention strategies that consider both intrinsic motivators and extrinsic rewards could significantly improve long-term job satisfaction and teacher retention.

Finally, we recommend that policymakers and school administrators adopt a more holistic view of teacher job satisfaction, recognizing the interplay between self-determination, working environment, and broader organizational factors. By addressing these elements in concert, educational institutions can create more supportive and satisfying work environments for teachers, potentially leading to improved educational outcomes for students.

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