Instructional Competence, Autonomy, and Relatedness as Predictors of Teaching Motivation among Teachers in Private Elementary Schools

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100300252

Received: 14 March 2026; Accepted: 21 March 2026; Published: 02 April 2026

ABSTRACT

Globally, teacher motivation remains a challenge. This study determined the significance of instructional competence, autonomy, and relatedness as predictors of teacher motivation. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational predictive approach, involving the entire population of 159 private elementary teachers using a total enumeration sampling technique yielded results that the predictive model for teaching motivation ($MT = -0.242 + 0.073x_1 + 0.316x_2 + 0.663x_3$) is significant supporting the Self Determination Theory. Further research is recommended to examine additional variables that may explain the remaining 33.8% of variance in teaching motivation not accounted for by this study's predictors. Qualitative research may also be conducted to identify themes that could inform and support future investigations.

Keywords: Instructional competence, autonomy, relatedness, predictors of teaching motivation, private elementary school teacher

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE

Studies show that low teaching motivation remains a global concern (Abdulrahman & Hui, 2018). Declining teaching motivation among educators persists across various educational settings worldwide(Mirwoba, 2024).

In Bangladesh, China, Nigeria and Kenya this problem of low teaching motivation is continuously disturbing in the educational field. (Sultana et al., 2025, Stephens & Somerville, 2025), (Ba'aba, 2024; Njiru, 2014; Njiru, 2018). In the Philippines, poor teaching motivation among teachers has been explicitly identified as a concern within educational research and policy discussions (Sala, 2023). Filipino teachers exhibit low levels of teaching motivation across the teaching workforce (Tolentino, Cruz, & Ablaza, 2023).

The consequences of low teaching motivation among teachers negatively affect the quality of instruction, poor classroom management, increased stress and burnout, low job satisfaction, and weakened professional commitment. Collectively, these effects create a negative school climate and hinder the overall effectiveness of the teaching–learning process (Suárez-Mesa & Gómez, 2021; Hellebaut et al., 2023). Despite the importance of this issue, limited studies have examined how instructional competence and the components of Self-Determination Theory autonomy, competence, and relatedness shape the motivation of elementary teachers in the Philippine context. This gap triggers the conduct of this study.

This study is significant because it supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) by highlighting the importance of competent, motivated, and well-supported teachers in delivering inclusive and high-quality learning, which aligns with the mission and vision of Holy Cross of Davao College to form holistically developed, values-driven, and globally competitive learners through excellence in teaching and service.

This study aimed to determine the significance of Instructional Competence, Autonomy, and Relatedness as Predictors of Teaching Motivation.

Specifically, it determined the following objectives:

1. To determine the level of instructional competence in terms of instructional delivery, classroom management, assessment, personal competencies (soft skills); autonomy in terms of for teaching in terms of didactical-pedagogical autonomy, curricular autonomy, collaborative attitude; relatedness in terms of relatedness at home (give back), relatedness at home (keep up), relatedness with peers, relatedness with faculty; motivation for teaching in terms of intrinsic motivation identified motivation, introjected motivation, external motivation

2. To determine the significance of the relationship between instructional competence and autonomy, relatedness and the teaching motivation

3. To determine the significance of the degree of the individual and combined degree of influence of instructional competence, autonomy, relatedness and teaching motivation

4. To determine the significance of the predictive model for teaching motivation with instructional competence, autonomy and relatedness as predictors.

The null hypothesis presented below was tested at the 0.05 significance level.

Ho1: Instructional competence, autonomy, relatedness, and teaching motivation are not significantly correlated

Ho2: Instructional competence, autonomy, and relatedness have no significant individual and combined degree of influence on teaching motivation.

Ho3: The predictive model for teaching motivation with instructional competence, autonomy and relatedness as predictors is not significant.

This study is anchored on the self-determination theory. The theory suggests that the three universal psychological needs, called competence, autonomy, and relatedness, are vital for optimal behavioral development and functioning. This study's findings align with the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), examining how three core psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness predict behavior (Deci & Ryan 2012).

Figure 1 presents the conceptual paradigm of the interplay among the variables. Instructional competence has the following domains: instructional delivery, classroom management, assessment, and personal competencies (soft skills), as defined by Asis et al. (2023).The autonomy aspect encompasses elements such as didactical-pedagogical autonomy, curricular autonomy, and collaborative attitude (Vangrieken et al., 2017). On the other hand, relatedness highlights the importance of relatedness at home (give back) and at home (keep up), with peers, and with faculty (Guiffrida et al., 2008). Finally, motivation for teaching is defined through intrinsic motivation, identified motivation, introjected motivation, and external motivation (Roth et al., 2007).

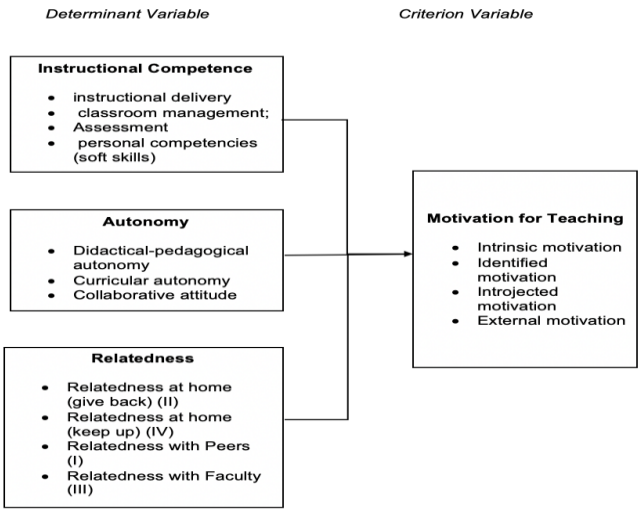

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative research utilized the descriptive-correlational predictive design, which uses numerical data and statistical analysis to forecast future outcomes or trends by analyzing existing data patterns to understand and predict relationships between variables (van Witteloostuijn et al., 2022).

The descriptive research approach offers an objective and systematic way to understand the instructional competence, autonomy, relatedness, and teacher motivation by capturing their existing characteristics. Meanwhile, correlational research is appropriate for exploring possible relationships among these variables, showing how instructional competence, autonomy, and relatedness may be linked to teacher motivation. Since this study does not establish causality but aims to identify patterns and connections within an actual school setting, the descriptive-correlational design serves as a suitable and reliable framework for meeting its research goals.

This research was conducted in the 2nd congressional district of Davao City, Philippines. The area is described as an urbanized area where there are more public than the number of private schools. The locale was chosen because it provides access to a sufficient number of private school elementary teachers who can offer relevant insights into the relationship between instructional competence, autonomy, relatedness, and teaching motivation of elementary teachers. Selecting this area also ensures that the study reflects the experiences and perspectives of teachers working within the private education system.

The respondents of this study were 159 teachers from 7 identified private elementary schools. This study used total enumeration sampling to ensure full representation of the target population, improve the accuracy of the findings, and reduce the risk of sampling bias. Thus, teachers were chosen as respondents in the study. The respondents' participation is entirely voluntary, and informed consent is obtained from them. Further, respondents may withdraw from the study if they feel discomfort during data collection.

Total enumeration sampling (also called complete enumeration or a census) involves collecting data from every member of a defined population, which means the study includes all units instead of a sample; this approach eliminates sampling error and provides highly accurate, fully representative results for the population of interest and allows detailed information about every individual to be obtained (Makwana et al., 2023).

The study employed an adapted and modified survey questionnaire composed of four sections and administered through face-to-face distribution to gather quantitative data. The instrument was designed to examine the relationships among instructional competence, autonomy, relatedness, and teaching motivation. Instructional competence, adapted from Asis et al. (2022), consisted of 40 items and demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha = .903$). Autonomy, based on Vangrieken et al. (2017), included 20 items with a reliability coefficient of .803. Relatedness, adapted from Guiffrida et al. (2008), comprised 18 items and yielded a reliability coefficient of .771. Finally, teaching motivation, adapted from Roth et al. (2007), consisted of 16 items with a reliability coefficient of .826.

The likert scale below was used to analyze the descriptive results for all the variables.

Range of Mean	Descriptive Level	Descriptive Interpretation
3.25 – 4.00	Very High	Very Good
2.50 – 3.24	High	Good
1.74 – 2.49	Low	Poor
1.00 – 1.74	Very Low	Very Poor

The data gathering utilized in this study was a face to face survey. (In quantitative research, face-to-face survey techniques involve interviewers meeting respondents in person to administer structured questionnaires, which

has traditionally been regarded as the "gold standard" for survey data collection because it often yields higher response rates and better measurement quality than self-administered modes, since interviewers can motivate participation, clarify complex questions, and ensure survey procedures are followed, leading to more comprehensive and representative data for statistical analysis (Kibuchi et al., 2024)

The researcher employed appropriate statistical tools in analyzing the results of the study. The weighted mean is used to assess the levels of instructional competence, autonomy, relatedness, and teaching motivation of elementary teachers. Standard deviation is used to measure the variability or dispersion in responses regarding instructional competence, autonomy, relatedness, and teaching motivation among elementary teachers. It helps determine how consistently teachers' responses cluster around the mean (average) and whether there is a wide range of differences in their perceptions. Pearson's r is used to examine the correlation between instructional competence, autonomy, relatedness, and motivation for teaching, and Lastly, multiple linear regression is used to determine the significant single and combined influences of instructional competence, autonomy, relatedness, and teaching motivation among elementary teachers (Rubinfeld, 2000). The values of r range from -1 to 1 were interpreted using the following (Pareno, E. & Jimenez, R. 2014):

Standard Deviation Value Ranges and Interpretation

SD VALUE RANGES	**INTERPRETATION**
0.00 - 0.50	Very low variability/ responses are very consistent
0.51 - 1.00	Low variability / responses are relatively consistent
1.01 - 1.50	Moderate variability/ responses show some differences
1.51 - 2.00	High Variability/ responses vary significantly
ABOVE 2.00	Very high variability / responses are highly dispersed

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to examine the correlation between instructional competence, autonomy, relatedness and motivation for teaching. The values of r ranges from 0 to 1 were interpreted using the following.

Pearson r-values			**Interpretation**
0	**-**		No Correlation
0.01	**-**	**0.20**	Slight Correlation
0.20	**-**	**0.40**	Low Correlation
0.41	**-**	**0.70**	Moderate Correlation
0.71	**-**	**0.90**	High Correlation
0.91	**-**	**0.99**	Very High Correlation
1	**-**		Perfect Correlation

To uphold the ethical standards of this research, the researchers ensured the safety and well-being of all respondents, as emphasized by Bryman and Bell (2007). The researcher adhered to the HCDC SMILE Review standards which acknowledged the respondents of the study as non-vulnerable sample. Participation in the study was completely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Respondents were protected from harm, and the study strictly adhered to international ethical guidelines by

prioritizing honesty, minimizing risks, safeguarding privacy and data confidentiality, and maintaining transparency throughout the research process to strengthen its validity.

RESULTS

The analysis and interpretation of the collected data are presented in this chapter. It specifically includes descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression analysis of the variables involved.

Descriptive Analysis of the Predictive and Criterion Variables

Table 1. Descriptive Table, n=159

Variables	Standard Deviation	Mean	Verbal Description
Instructional Competence	**0.26**	**3.78**	**Very High**
Instructional Delivery	0.30	3.77	Very High
Classroom Management	0.28	3.79	Very High
Assessment	0.33	3.73	Very High
Personal Competencies	0.29	3.82	Very High
Autonomy	**0.40**	**3.63**	**Very High**
Didactical-Pedagogical	0.47	3.59	Very High
Curricular	0.50	3.58	Very High
Collaborative	0.52	3.71	Very High
Relatedness	**0.34**	**3.73**	**Very High**
Relatedness with Peers	0.39	3.71	Very High
Relatedness at Home (give back)	0.36	3.82	Very High
Relatedness with Faculty	0.39	3.76	Very High
Relatedness at Home (keep up)	0.50	3.62	Very High
Motivation for Teaching	**0.41**	**3.65**	**Very High**
Intrinsic	0.44	3.69	Very High
Identified	0.41	3.73	Very High
Introjected	0.47	3.65	Very High
External	0.55	3.54	Very High

Table 1 is a descriptive table, it contains the predictors namely, instructional competence, autonomy, relatedness and motivation for teaching. Moreover, it contains the criterion variable that is teaching motivation. Finally, it shows the standard deviation, mean, and verbal description, and that there are 159 respondents.

As shown in Table 1, teachers' instructional competence obtained a mean score of 3.78, (SD =0.26) which is described as very high with very consistent responses, indicating that their instructional competence is excellent.

All indicators of instructional competence were also rated very high. Similarly, autonomy received a mean score of 3.63, (SD = 0.40) likewise described as very high, with all its indicators also rated very high with very consistent responses. Relatedness achieved a mean score of 3.73, (SD = 0.34) described as very high, indicating that their relatedness is very good with a moderate consistent response, with each indicator similarly rated very high. Finally, motivation for teaching recorded a mean score of 3.65, also described as very high, reflecting that teachers' overall teaching motivation is very good, with all its indicators likewise rated very high.

Teachers demonstrated very high levels across all variables, with instructional competence emerging as the strongest, followed closely by relatedness, motivation for teaching, and autonomy. All indicators under each variable were consistently rated very high, reflecting uniformly positive perceptions in these domains. Comparatively, instructional competence and relatedness were slightly more pronounced than autonomy and motivation, yet all variables reflect an overall excellent and well-balanced professional profile among teachers.

Table 2. Correlation Table

Independent Variables	Motivation for Teaching			
	r-value	p-value	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Instructional Competence	0.594	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Autonomy	0.676	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Relatedness	0.778	0.000	Rejected	Significant

Table 2 presents the correlation analysis between instructional competence, autonomy, relatedness, and the motivation for teaching among elementary teachers. The table includes the r-value, p-value, decision on null hypothesis testing at the 0.05 level of significance, and the corresponding interpretations.

Specifically, the table shows a statistical significant link between teaching desire and instructional competency ($p = 0.000$), which is below the 0.05 significance level, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. A considerable degree of correlation is indicated by an r-value of 0.594, suggesting that more capable teachers are more likely to be driven. Similarly, a p-value of 0.000 indicated a significant relationship between autonomy and motivation for teaching. The corresponding r-value of 0.676 indicates a moderate correlation, suggesting that teachers who perceive greater autonomy are likely to experience higher motivation. In addition, relatedness was significantly related to motivation for teaching ($p = 0.000$; $r = 0.778$). This indicates that teachers who feel a stronger sense of connection and belonging to colleagues and students tend to be more motivated.

The findings reveal that instructional competence, autonomy, and relatedness are all significantly associated with teachers' motivation. Among the three, relatedness shows the strongest relationship with motivation, followed by autonomy, while instructional competence demonstrates a comparatively weaker yet still meaningful association.

Table 3 presents the multiple linear regression analysis. The table includes the *determinant variable*s namely, instructional competence, autonomy, relatedness and criterion variable motivation for teaching. It also includes β value, S.E-value, t-value, p-value, Decision on Ho and interpretation. Moreover, it also presents the regression summary containing R^2, F-value, p-value, decision on Ho and regression model equation.

Table 3. Regression Table

Independent Variables	**Motivation for Teaching**					
	Beta (β)	**S.E**	**t-value**	**p-value**	**Decision on Ho**	**Interpretation**
Constant	-0.242	0.280	0.865	0.388	Accepted	Not Significant

Instructional Competence	0.073	0.103	0.711	0.478	Accepted	Not Significant
Autonomy	0.316	0.062	5.067	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Relatedness	0.663	0.085	7.837	0.000	Rejected	Significant

Regression Summary: **R^2 = 66.20%; F-value = 100.903; p-value = 0.000**

$MT = -0.242 + 0.073x_1 + 0.316x_2 + 0.663x_3$

Degree of Influence of the Predictive Variables

In particular, table 3 demonstrate that instructional competency variable indicates a 7.3% not significant degree of influence on motivation for teaching (**β**=0.073; p=0.478 @ <0.05). Moreover, autonomy variable indicates a 31.6% significant degree of influence on the criterion variable (**β** =0.316; p=0.00 @<0.05). Finally, relatedness variable denotes a 66.3% significant degree of influence on the criterion variable (**β** =0.663; p=0.000 @<0.05). This findings show that holding other variables constant, relatedness is the strongest predictor of motivation, followed by autonomy, while instructional competence has the weakest influence. Together, the predictive variables have a 66.20% a significant combined degree of influence on the criterion (R^2 =0.662; p=0.000 @<0.05).

Significance of the Model Outcome for Teaching Motivation

Based on the values of the coefficients shown in the table for instructional competence (0.073), autonomy (0.316), and relatedness (0.663), and the constant (-0.242), the model is constructed as: Y = -0.242 + 0.073x1 + 0.316x2 + 0.663x3. With the F-value of 100.903, and p-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 degree of confidence hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. It indicates that the predictive model for teaching motivation with instructional competence, autonomy, and relatedness as predictors is significant.

Summary of Findings

1. All the predictive variables are significantly correlated with teaching motivation.
2. Only autonomy and relatedness variables, not instructional competence, significantly influenced teaching motivation; nevertheless, the three predictors combined, significantly influenced the criterion.
3. The strength of the predictive model is significant

DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the discussions on the correlation among variables, the influence and strength of the predictors, the conclusions, and the recommendations based on the findings of the study.

Instructional Competence, Autonomy, Relatedness, and Teaching Motivation Correlation

Recent research supports the view that instructional competence, autonomy, and relatedness are strongly associated with motivational outcomes in education, consistent with the present study's findings on teaching motivation. Carriedo (2023) reported that autonomy-supportive teaching environments enhance learners' perceived autonomy and competence, which in turn foster higher intrinsic motivation, demonstrating how the fulfillment of basic psychological needs strengthens engagement. In a Philippine context, Tagud (2025) found that autonomy, competence, and relatedness significantly predicted students' motivation, with competence emerging as the strongest predictor, underscoring the combined influence of these variables across educational domains. Similarly, Fradkin-Hayslip (2023) showed that teachers who experience greater autonomy also report higher levels of competence and relatedness, contributing to stronger motivation and job satisfaction.

However, other studies emphasize that the predictive strength of these variables may differ by context. Wang (2025) demonstrated through meta-analytic evidence that autonomy and competence are consistently enhanced by need-supportive practices and are reliable predictors of intrinsic motivation, whereas relatedness shows more context-dependent effects. These findings suggest that while instructional competence, autonomy, and relatedness generally support motivation—as shown in the present study—their relative influence may vary across educational settings and populations, highlighting the need for cautious generalization (Wang, 2025).

Teaching Motivation as Influenced by Autonomy, Relatedness and Instructional Competence

Recent research consistently shows that teachers' motivation is positively influenced by the satisfaction of basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Teachers who experience higher autonomy are more likely to engage in need-supportive instructional practices that enhance their motivation to teach, while simultaneously fostering competence and relatedness in the classroom (Cilalı, 2024). Likewise, studies on professional development reveal that when teachers' digital competence is developed alongside support for autonomy and social connection, their engagement and motivation increase, indicating that competence alone is most effective when embedded within a supportive motivational climate (Chiu, 2024). Evidence from student-centered research further mirrors these patterns, demonstrating that autonomy, competence, and relatedness collectively predict motivation in learning contexts, which parallels the dynamics observed among teachers (Tagud, 2025).

Although these relationships are generally positive, some studies emphasize contextual differences in the strength of each predictor. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that autonomy and competence are consistently strong predictors of motivation, whereas relatedness may exert more variable effects depending on educational setting and research design, suggesting that its influence is context-specific (Wang, 2025). These findings align with the present study, which revealed that relatedness is the strongest predictor of teaching motivation, followed by autonomy, while instructional competence contributes to a lesser degree—reflecting both the overall support for SDT-based relationships and the variability inherent in different educational environments.

Teaching Motivation as Predicted by Autonomy, Relatedness and Instructional Competence

Recent studies indicate that teaching motivation is strongly influenced by the satisfaction of teachers' basic psychological needs, specifically autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Evidence shows that teachers who experience higher autonomy are more likely to engage in need-supportive instructional practices that enhance their intrinsic motivation to teach, while simultaneously fostering competence and relatedness within the classroom (Cilalı, Michou, & Daumiller, 2024). Similarly, professional development programs that nurture teachers' autonomy, competence, and relatedness have been shown to increase engagement and motivation in teaching, highlighting the importance of these needs in predicting motivational outcomes (Chiu, 2024). Supporting this, research in student learning contexts demonstrates that autonomy, competence, and relatedness collectively predict motivation, reinforcing the relevance of these psychological needs across educational settings (Tagud, 2025). Furthermore, autonomy support has been found to facilitate motivational engagement by enhancing competence and relatedness satisfaction, which underscores the predictive role of these needs for teaching motivation (Siacor, Ng, & Liu, 2024).

While the overall relationships are largely consistent, some studies suggest that the strength of each predictor can vary depending on context and mediating factors. Meta-analytic evidence by Wang (2025) indicates that autonomy and competence are consistently strong predictors of motivation, whereas relatedness may exert variable effects depending on instructional context and research design. Moreover, relatedness and competence may influence motivation indirectly through mediators such as teaching enjoyment and professional reflection, showing that predictive pathways can be complex rather than strictly direct (Guo & Xu, 2024; Vedder-Weiss, Roth, & Mishaeli, 2024). These findings align with the present study, which identified relatedness as the strongest predictor of teaching motivation, followed by autonomy, with instructional competence exerting a smaller, though meaningful, influence.

Model for Teaching Motivation with Autonomy, Relatedness and Instructional Competence as Predictors

Recent research supports the model in which teaching motivation is predicted by autonomy, relatedness, and instructional competence. Studies indicate that teachers who experience higher autonomy and competence show stronger intrinsic motivation for teaching, and that supportive professional environments further enhance these effects, highlighting the predictive role of basic psychological needs in motivating instructional behavior (Chiu, 2024). Collaborative professional development programs that support teachers' autonomy, competence, and relatedness have also been shown to increase reflective engagement and autonomous motivation, reinforcing the idea that need satisfaction is central to predicting motivation among educators (Vedder-Weiss, Roth, & Mishaeli, 2024). Evidence from student-focused research similarly demonstrates that autonomy, competence, and relatedness significantly predict motivational outcomes, indicating that these basic psychological needs are broadly relevant across educational contexts (Tagud, 2025). Additionally, meta-analytic findings from self-determination theory-based interventions confirm that autonomy and competence consistently predict intrinsic motivation, while relatedness can contribute variably depending on the context, further supporting the inclusion of these predictors in models of teaching motivation (Wang et al., 2024).

While the overall predictive relationships are consistent, research also points to contextual nuances. Relatedness and competence may influence teaching motivation indirectly through mediators such as teaching enjoyment, self-efficacy, or professional reflection, indicating that these predictors do not always operate through direct pathways (Guo & Xu, 2024; Vedder-Weiss, Roth, & Mishaeli, 2024). Moreover, the strength of each predictor may vary depending on the educational environment or population studied, suggesting that while autonomy, relatedness, and instructional competence reliably predict teaching motivation, the magnitude and pathways of their effects can differ across contexts (Wang et al., 2024; Tagud, 2025). These findings collectively validate the proposed model of teaching motivation while emphasizing the importance of considering indirect effects and contextual factors in interpreting predictive relationships.

CONCLUSION

Based on findings it is concluded that Instructional Competence, Autonomy, and Relatedness are significant predictors of Teaching Motivation. Hence, the self-determination theory is affirmed stating that competence, autonomy, and relatedness are vital for optimal behavioral development and functioning.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that future research explore additional factors influencing teaching motivation to account for the remaining 33.8% of unexplained variance not addressed in this study. Finally, qualitative studies may be conducted to identify emerging themes that could serve as potential variables for understanding the factors that influence teaching motivation.

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