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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Motivational Factors that Influence Choosing Teaching as a Career: A FIT-Choice Study of Preservice and Inservice Teachers in India

Varda Sardana · Shubhangi Verma · Shubham Singhania

ABSTRACT

Background/purpose – This study examines the validity of the Factors Influencing Teaching (FIT) Choice Scale, developed by Watt and Richardson (2007), in the Indian context, by understanding the influential factors that motivate individuals to choose teaching as a profession.

Materials/methods – The study uses an exploratory research design. Purposive sampling technique is employed to obtain a sample of 184 inservice and preservice teachers from India, using a structured questionnaire for data collection. The study further makes use of descriptive and inferential statistics in analyzing the collected data.

Results – The findings suggest that the factors which motivate students to go into teaching as a profession are their perceived teaching abilities, social utility values such as ability to make a social contribution as well as shaping the future of the youth/young minds, and intrinsic career value.

Conclusion – The study provides suggestions to policymakers and recruiting institutions to consider certain factors whilst designing job descriptions for roles within educational institutions. It also emphasizes the importance of budding teachers to recognize factors that play a crucial role in their career choice decisions.

Keywords – FIT choice, teaching, motivation, education, career choice.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In ancient India, great emphasis was placed upon the role of educators, known as "Gurus," to sharpen students' intellect in spheres of knowledge (Chand, 2015). Teachers were expected to possess significantly high teaching ability, subject knowledge, and were considered as the leaders and builders of society (Prakasha & Jayamma, 2012). Teachers were regarded with a special status and held in high esteem throughout society. The education system in India, as we see it today, is based on the British education system, having been established during the colonial times. This system has led to the practice of English medium education in India, with the aim to ensure that the Indian workforce can be employed for the administration of British India (Cheney et al., 2005).

The period following India's declaration of independence saw a deterioration in the service conditions of teachers. Teachers desisted from being projected as the agents of social transformation in the country (Batra, 2009). Although there was phenomenal acceleration and growth seen within the education system, the standards of teacher training in fact weakened (Rajput & Walia, 1998). This led to the start of a deterioration in the status of teachers. The concept of teacher assessment was initially laid down with the National Education Policy (NEP) in 1986. The training of teachers helps to increase their effectiveness, which further improves their teaching abilities, motivation, and thereby their job satisfaction (Rajput & Walia, 1998). In 1993, para-teachers started to be recruited in order to fill gaps in the teacher cadre. The working conditions for para-teachers, however, were found to be demeaning, and they faced a number of challenges such as lack of promotional opportunities, strained interpersonal relationships, and overcrowded classrooms (Kumar et al., 2001). Factors such as depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, unconducive teaching and learning environment, lack of self-efficacy, and job dissatisfaction frequently led to the burn-out of para-teachers (Toppo & Manjhi, 2013), and contributed to the decline seen in the quality of education. To add to this, the incapability of government schools to attract good quality academicians due to poor infrastructural facilities and uncompetitive salaries, had a direct impact on the quality of education in these schools (Borah, 2012). The reputation and respect for teachers has gradually been eroded, which has resulted in their move to the lower levels of the bureaucratic hierarchy.

The world is undergoing rapid changes as far as the education system is concerned, yet the Indian education system has failed to evolve much since colonial times. With the NEP 2020, there have been some critical changes proposed to India's education system. The NEP 2020 focuses on an adaption of the traditional learner-centric system of education. The policy tries to re-establish the long-lost reputation and status of teachers as some of the most respected citizens within Indian society. The latest policy acknowledges that teacher motivation is a crucial factor for the better future of students and therefore the nation. A number of motivational factors have been recognized, including the adequate provision of safe infrastructure, a vibrant and caring culture, collaboration with parents, non-involvement in administrative tasks, recognition, and promotion of outstanding work, and proper incentivization. Having recognized these issues, it is important for policymakers and other stakeholders to understand the factors that motivate preservice teachers in making the decision to enter the teaching profession, and to then stay within it for a prolonged career. As such, it is important that teacher-oriented policies are both formulated and successfully implemented. In order to achieve this, the current study applied the Factors Influencing Teaching (FIT) Choice Scale, which was developed by Watt and Richardson

(2007). Based on this rationale, the main objective of the current study is to reveal the motivational factors which most influence the decisions made by individuals seeking a career in teaching in India. The other objectives are to reveal the perception of those individuals regarding a career in teaching, and finally to examine the major reasons for the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of teachers in the profession.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is ample literature that has reviewed the various elements which are considered by individuals whilst choosing teaching as a career path. As stated by Kyriacou et al. (2003), the motivational factors can be categorized as intrinsic, altruistic, and extrinsic.

Intrinsic motivation for teaching consists of positive experiences that arise whilst dealing with children and guiding them (Wood, 1978). Extrinsic motivation relates to remuneration, working conditions, holiday entitlement and paid leave for assigned teachers (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). Altruistic motivations, however, mostly comprise of acts such as contributions to and the betterment of society (Yong, 1995). The majority of published studies have stated that students pursue teaching as a career as they both want to engage with children and also as a service to society (Anthony & Ord, 2008; Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Richards, 1960). Extrinsic factors were also found to be dominant in the decision-making to select teaching as the career path. Although extrinsic motivation is not considered sufficient to sustain a career teacher in the profession, it can definitely encourage them to stay committed to the profession (Andrew, 1983; Bastick, 2002; Saban, 2003). Wang (2004) found that gaining social status and teaching experience were also seen as influencing factors. In view of the far-reaching and significant shift of the teaching-learning process onto online platforms, Rana et al. (2021), added factors such as expert career, the efficacy of teachers, and value offered by the institutions can all motivate teachers to continue teaching within the virtual environment.

In an attempt to bring together and explore the various factors influencing the decision to choose teaching as a career, Watt and Richardson (2007) developed a multidimensional framework called FIT-Choice (Factors Influencing Teaching – Choice), based on the expectancy-value theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

Table 1. Countries where FIT-choice scale has been validated and used

Country	*Author (year of publication)*
Australia	Watt & Richardson (2007)
Turkey (English teachers)	Eren & Tezel (2010)
United States, Germany, Norway	Watt et al. (2012)
Netherlands	Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus (2012)
Croatia	Jugović et al. (2012)
Turkey	Kilinç et al. (2012)
Germany	König & Rothland (2012)
China, United States	Lin et al. (2012)
Switzerland (VET teachers)	Berger & D'Ascoli (2012)
Ireland	Heinz (2013)
Netherlands	Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus (2014)
Indonesia	Suryani et al. (2016)
United Arab Emirates (expat. teachers)	Sharif et al. (2016)

Country	*Author (year of publication)*
Ireland	Hennessy & Lynch (2017)
Spain	Gratacós et al. (2017)
United States	Ponnock et al. (2018)
Ghana	Salifu et al. (2018)
Norway	Nesje et al. (2018)
South Korea	Lee et al. (2019)
United States	Leech et al. (2019)
Finland, Germany	Goller et al. (2019)
Germany	Glutsch & König (2019)
Nigeria	Akpochafo (2020)

The scale, empirically validated in a number of countries and contexts (see Table 1), confirmed the existence of multiple factors that can impact the decision reached by an individual to enter the teaching profession. Teacher shortage has been one of the most concerning issues in India (Ravi et al., 2019). It has been observed that teaching, as a profession, is highly demanding; with teachers involved in several areas of activity over and above their teaching duties (e.g., management development programs, academic research, institution-based ventures, and administrative activities). Although the remuneration or salary does not necessarily demotivate candidates, hiring teachers on a contract basis has been shown to decrease their effectiveness and increased their absenteeism. In India, primary and middle school science teachers' interest and motivation to teach are linked with self-efficacy, which is achieved through teaching ability and having subject expert knowledge (Shireen et al., 2004). It has also been shown that female graduates may choose the teaching profession because of the low-stress levels and favorable working hours (Gokuladas, 2010).

2.1. Theoretical Framework: The FIT-Choice Model

The FIT–Choice model, as developed by Watt and Richardson (2007), is a valid and reliable model which has been used to assess the motivation of those taking up teaching as a career choice. The authors provided validity evidence through the longitudinal relationship between factors influencing teaching and subsequent entry into the teaching profession. These variables influence task perceptions, self-perception, task values, and fallback career (see Figure 1).

- Social influences refer to the influences, persuasions, and suggestions from family and friends regarding decisions to be taken regarding teaching as a career.
- Social dissuasion refers to the influences, convictions, and pressures received from family or friends not to choose the teaching profession.
- Prior or previous teaching and learning experience refers to an individual's teaching experience, whether in terms of role models or past teachers.
- Self-perception refers to insights about one's teaching abilities.
- Task perceptions consist of both "task demand" as well as "task return" factors. Task demand refers to an individual's perceptions regarding demands placed upon teachers in terms of expertise and workload. Task return is the perception of the return or rewards associated with teaching, along with recognition and respect that the career offers teachers.
- Task values consist of intrinsic value, social utility value, and personal utility value. Intrinsic value measures an individual's likings and inclination towards working as a

teacher or mentor. Social utility value measures a teacher's wish to benefit society. Personal utility value consists of family time, job security, and mobility in the job.

- Fallback career refers to a situation when teaching is considered a career of last-resort, due to failure to secure another career choice first, or for any other reason.

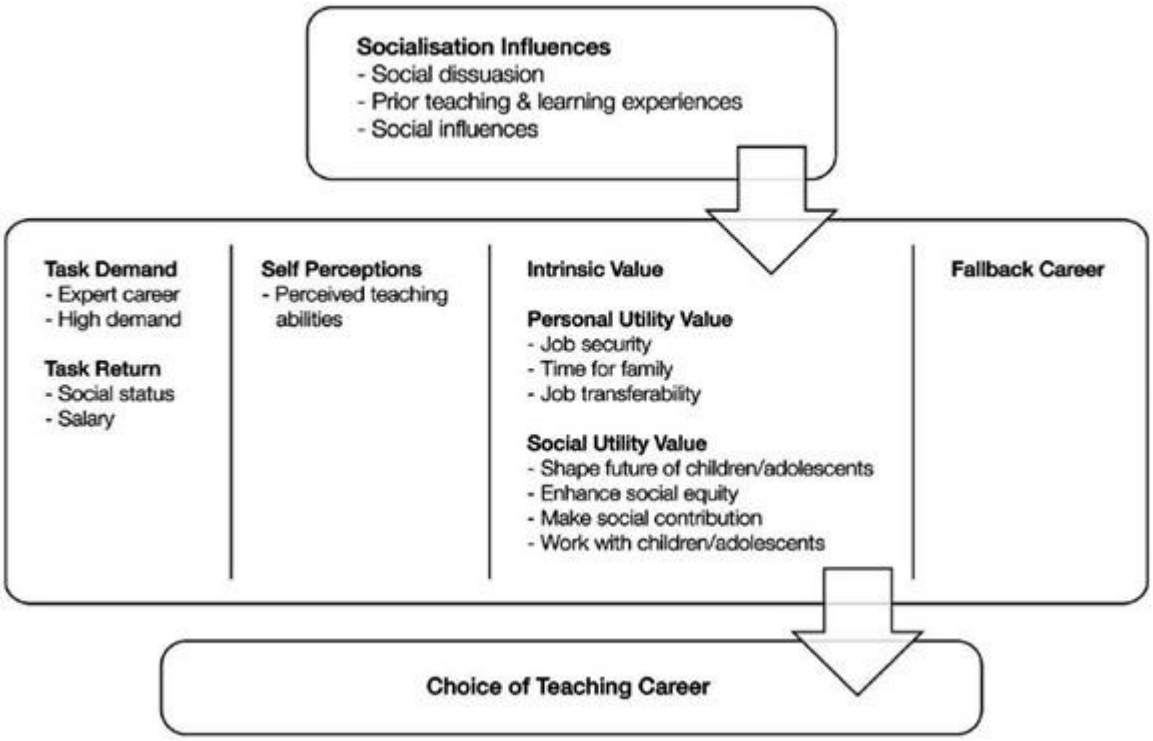

Figure 1. FIT-choice framework: Motivations for choosing a teaching career (Watt & Richardson, 2007)

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design and Instrument

The study uses primary data, collected in the form of participant responses through a structured questionnaire in line with the FIT-Choice scale. This was followed by the employment of a quantitative cross-sectional research design. In order to avoid any misinterpretation of the questions or factors, the questionnaire was designed in the English language and distributed only amongst English medium students and teachers. Each of the 12 factors considered to influence the choice of becoming teachers according to the FIT-Choice scale was assessed by either one, two, or three questions. In addition, five questions aimed to assess the respondent's perception towards teaching as a career, which formed part of the validation study by Watt and Richardson (2007).

3.2. Sample Size

The initial sample started with 200 preservice and inservice teachers in India; that is, students who are training to become teachers in the future. Of the 200 questionnaires distributed, in both online and offline form, 184 were returned, representing a response rate of 92%. Sincere attempt was made to include students and teachers from schools, colleges, and universities across various parts of India. The final sample included 66.3% as preservice teachers and 33.7% as inservice teachers (working in schools or colleges), with 31% male teachers and 69% female teachers.

3.3. Procedure

Higher education institutions were visited to collect data from preservice (candidate) teachers. After explaining the aim of the survey, the questionnaires were administered to the teachers and students who were studying to become teachers. The same process was followed for those reached out to through online means such as e-mail and social media.

3.4. Data Analysis

The study's quantitative data was analyzed according to Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) technique using IBM's SPSS version 21.0 analytical software. For extraction, Principal Component Factor (PCF) was employed along with Varimax rotation, after having combined the factors of motivation and perception. Descriptive analysis was subsequently used to capture the satisfaction level of the inservice teachers with having chosen the teaching profession as a career.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

From Table 2, it can be inferred that the teachers chose the teaching profession mostly to develop the minds of tomorrow (M = 4.10, SD = 0.975), followed by the perception that teaching is a well-respected position and a socially valued career (M = 4.08, SD = 1.108). Table 2 also shows that teachers do not consider teaching as their fallback career option (M = 2.0481, SD = 0.888), but that they considered it to be an expert level career (M = 4.06, SD = 0.952) with an agreeable salary (M = 3.37, SD = 1.129).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Factors	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
Good salary	3.37	1.129
Social status	4.08	1.108
Social dissuasion	3.27	1.209
Ability	4.02	0.927
Enhancing social equity	4.01	0.915
Develop young minds	4.10	0.975
Making a societal contribution	3.82	1.070
Expert career	4.06	0.952
Intrinsic career value	3.86	0.963
Job security	3.83	0.890
Time for family	3.80	0.944
Fallback career	2.05	0.888
Job transferability	3.56	0.949
Working with youth	3.82	1.060
Prior teaching and learning experience	3.97	0.873

4.2. Inferential Statistics

First and foremost, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test along with Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used to determine the data's suitability for EFA testing (see Table 3).

Table 3. KMO & Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) - Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.872
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	.000*

* 1% level of significance

As seen in Table 3, the KMO measure was calculated as .872, which is deemed to be sufficiently high, and hence made EFA suitable for analysis. The *p*-value was lower than that of the level of significance, making the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity significant.

EFA was employed using Principal Component Factor extraction and Varimax rotation, and the results presented in Table 4. Following the approach of Kaiser (1974) and Bryman (1990), variables with factor loading values above .40 were included in the analysis, and where the factor Eigen values exceeded the value of 1 (Kaiser, 1974). To begin, the previously theorized motivation and perception factors for the teaching profession were specified, which produced a total of six factors with certain cross-loading items. These cross-loaded factors were the subsequently removed.

Table 4. Factor Analysis Results: Factor Loading on FIT-choice subscales

Factors/Indicators	*Loadings*
Influential factors	
Ability	
I have the qualities and qualifications to become a teacher.	.442
Enhancing social equity	
It allows me to benefit the socially disadvantaged.	.758
Shape future of young minds/youth	
It allows me to influence the next generation.	.704
Make social contribution	
It allows me to make a worthwhile social contribution.	.770
Expert career	
It is a challenging career that requires expertise.	.683
Intrinsic career value	
I like and I am interested in teaching.	.537
I have always wanted to be a teacher.	.594
Job security	
Teaching is a secure job.	.745
It offers a steady career path and continuous learning.	.638
Family time	
Teaching provides flexibility of time.	.786
Teaching hours fit/will fit with the responsibilities of having a family.	.719
Fallback career	
I was/am not able to get into my first-choice career.	.615
I was/am unsure of what career I wanted/want.	.532
It is a last resort career.	.727
Job transferability	
Teaching profession is recognized all over the world.	.605
It is/will be a useful job for me while changing my city/country.	.527
Work with children/adolescents	

Factors/Indicators	*Loadings*
I like working with children, adolescents, or students.	.602
Prior teaching and learning experiences	
I have had good teachers as role models and wish to be the same.	.543
I have had positive learning experiences, which I want to pass on.	.637
Social influences	
People I worked with thought/think I should become a teacher.	.738
My family or friends influenced me to become a teacher.	.661
Good salary	
I think teaching is a well-paid profession.	.651
Social status	
I believe teaching is a well-respected and socially valued career.	.660
Social dissuasion	
Teaching allows/will allow me to work in other jobs as well.	.799

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Motivational Factors for Teachers

In the context of the current study's sample from India, the highest rated factors which act as motivators were perceived to be teaching ability, followed by social utility values (societal benefaction, shaping the future of young minds/youth, enhancing social justice), intrinsic career value, personal utility value (job security, family time, mobility of job), and socialization influences (prior teaching and learning experiences and social influences).

In international studies regarding the FIT-Choice framework, a difference was seen between Eastern and Western cultures. Social utility and teaching ability are considered as important reasons for choosing the teaching profession in the majority of Eastern countries such as Croatia (Jugović et al., 2012), China (Lin et al., 2012), the Netherlands (Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2014), Indonesia (Suryani, 2016), Ghana (Salifu et al., 2018), and Nigeria (Akpochafo, 2020). In Western countries such as Australia (Watt & Richardson, 2007), Norway (Nesje et al., 2018), the Republic of Ireland (Heinz, 2013; Hennessy & Lynch, 2017), and Switzerland (Berger & D'Ascoli, 2012), teaching ability and intrinsic value act as the main factors influencing teaching career decisions. The results seen from studies in India regarding the most influential factors align with and corroborate with those of other Eastern countries. The probable reason for social utility being the most important factor in European countries could be based on cultural differences, and the inclination towards care for the family and the younger generations.

Furthermore, only 16.5% of the sample in the study accepted that they had taken up or would take up teaching as a fallback career, indicating that students entered teacher education program as a positive choice, which is similar to findings from studies conducted in Australia (Watt & Richardson, 2007), Germany, the United States, Australia, and Norway (Watt et al., 2012), Spain (Gratacós et al., 2017), South Korea (Lee et al., 2019), and also Turkey (Kilinç et al., 2012). Also, the teaching profession is perceived as a career high on task demand compared to its return (i.e., salary, respect etc.). In the context of India, in addition to the social utility factors, perceived teaching ability and intrinsic value motivations were

considered among the most influential factors, whereas prior positive teaching and learning experiences were not seen as highly influential, unlike in the Australian validation study (Watt & Richardson, 2007).

5.2. Satisfaction of Teachers

As mentioned by Kaub et al. (2016), the alignment of interest with the working environment of a job leads to higher job satisfaction. In the current study, it was observed that more than 70% of the teachers were reportedly satisfied with their profession. A high level of satisfaction stems from work environment, work quality, and work-life balance, whilst teachers are relatively less satisfied with growth opportunities and remuneration or the perks that they may receive. This finding can be said to be in line with the study conducted by Borah (2012). Overall, 63% of the inservice teachers who expressed a wish to change their career, expected to receive a higher income from their expected future jobs. Hence, income is one of the factors that may lead teachers to feel the need to leave the teaching profession. However, this result may be an outcome of teachers being hired in India on a contractual basis, paying them lower salaries, and making them work for longer hours (Kumar et al., 2001; Toppo & Manjhi, 2013). As to the number of days paid leave in the teaching profession, 35.4% of the inservice teachers received up to 10 days leave per year, whereas only 14.6% expected to have and were satisfied with that amount. However, 64.6% of the teachers expected to have in excess of 30 days leave each year, whilst only 43.8% can avail the same.

6. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The study empirically validated the FIT-Choice model in the Indian context. Furthermore, the study backs up the results of previous studies that there are indeed several factors that incentivize both students and professionals to opt for teaching as a career choice amongst all the available alternatives. The need therefore, is for teacher training programs and courses to focus upon these factors.

The current study recommends that the agencies engaged in conducting recruitment campaigns for the teaching profession in India utilize the findings of this study in order to better understand and formulate teacher recruitment guidelines according to the most influential factors such as teaching ability, social utility, intrinsic value, and socialization. These teacher aspirations will help recruiters to retain more teachers for a longer period, and with improved commitment towards their respective teaching institution.

The current study may be considered a useful guiding platform for aspiring teachers or undergraduate students in selecting the teaching profession as their career of choice. Candidates who associate themselves with characteristics such as social utility value, teaching ability, and professional commitment may therefore pursue teaching as a career path. Policymakers are recommended to reestablish the esteem and status of the teaching profession. There should be greater emphasis placed on teacher training in order to decrease the socioeconomic gaps associated with the profession and to encourage the professional development of serving teachers. Policymakers should also consider the motivation of teachers, as this is considered a crucial factor in promoting a better future for the next generation and the nation.

6.1. Recommendations for Future Research

An in-depth longitudinal study is recommended in order to best determine what may encourage talented youth to steer towards choosing a career in the teaching profession. This would help governments, schools, and universities to design better policies so as to attract and retain those who can shape the future of the country. In addition, cross-cultural and cross-gender studies could be conducted in order to better understand teachers' perceptions and outlook, and then to develop appropriate recruitment, selection, and training policies accordingly.

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Author Contributions V.S.: Conceptualization, results and findings, writing original draft. S.V.: Discussions, sampling, review and editing. S.S.: Conceptualization, literature review, methodology, data analysis. All authors have read and approved the final version of the article.

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