



Research Article

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Happiness of High School Teachers: Research in Da Nang City and QuangNam Province, Central Region of VietNam

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Abstract

Feeling happy in the teaching process plays a crucial role in supporting students. When teachers are happy, it not only directly impacts their performance but also affects the psychological development of students. Using the method of testing the happiness scale developed by (Phan Thi Mai Huong., 2019), which considers several factors connected to negative emotions, positive emotions, and job satisfaction and value. We surveyed over 360 high school teachers in Da Nang City and QuangNam province. The results showed that high school teachers over the age of 50 have a higher sense of happiness compared to those under 30. Female teachers have a higher level of satisfaction and sense of value in their work than male teachers. Based on these findings, we propose several measures to improve the sense of happiness among high school teachers.

Keywords: *feeling happy, high school teacher, positive emotions, negative emotions, satisfaction*

1. Introduction

Feeling happy in the teaching process plays a huge role in training and interacting with students, or in other words, it has a strong impact on the professional activities of teachers. From a research perspective, studies conducted from 1999 to 2004 have shown that if workers are happy, they are more active and engaged with their organizations (Alva, 2017). Pryce-Jones has shown that the happiest employees have 180% more energy than those who are most dissatisfied at work (Pryce-

Jones, 2014). The happiest employees are also 50% more motivated at work than the least happy employees. Research on teacher happiness by (Tatarkiewicz, 1976) and (Barker, 2009) suggests that teachers' happiness is linked to students' progress and recognition of their teaching achievements.

According to Damásio, B. F. and all, they given the context of marriage, this studies frequently show that married individuals tend to experience slightly higher levels of happiness compared to those who cohabit without marriage. Interestingly, the author discovered that in societies with more liberal gender role norms, this gap diminishes significantly for women, while it remains relatively unchanged for men (Damásio, 2023). This observation held true irrespective of individual gender role attitudes among women and the level of gender equality in economic opportunities within a country.

The study on the relationship between happiness and gender, health in students by Mahon NE, Yarcheski A, Yarcheski TJ found that there were no gender differences in happiness between male and female students, while there was a statistically significant positive correlation between happiness and health (Mahon NE, 2015)

Salavera, C., & Usán, P. study on the relationship between social skills and happiness in first-year students at the Teacher Training School, as well as gender differences, indicates variations in gender aspects regarding the perception of happiness. Specifically, male students score higher in all aspects related to social skills, while female students score higher in all aspects related to happiness. The research demonstrates that factors such as self-expression in social environments and the ability to refuse and terminate social relationships have a direct and significant impact on happiness in males, whereas self-expression in social environments and the ability to express anger lead to a higher perception of happiness in females (Salavera, 2021).

The study on the mental health of preschool and primary school teachers, authored and colleagues, explores the relationship between mental health (understood as happiness, mental well-being, self-esteem, and life satisfaction) and several social variables (gender, age, years of teaching experience, type of contract, and educational stage) (Salavera C. U., 2024). The results indicate a correlation between happiness, life satisfaction, and self-esteem; mental health among preschool teachers is higher. However, in primary school teachers, the connection between mental health and life satisfaction is lower.

In 2019, the Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam organized the launching ceremony of the "Implementing the Plan to Improve the Capacity of Pedagogical Behavior and Teacher Ethics for a Happy School," aiming for a healthy, civilized, and friendly pedagogical environment with the core values of "love, safety, and respect" (Ministry of Education and Training., 2019). This initiative stems from the Happy Schools Project model recommended by UNESCO in early 2017, which calls for fundamental changes in national education systems towards innovation and improving the quality of comprehensive education. The goal is for students, teachers, and everyone involved to be happy in Happy Schools.

In this context, the study of the current state of happiness among school teachers can serve as a basis for proposing feasible measures to improve their sense of well-being, thereby enhancing the quality of training and promoting the development of education.

2. Definition and Factors of Happiness

2.1 Research about happiness

Happiness has been studied internationally for many years. Researchers such as (Chen, 2022) argue that feeling happy at work involves frequently experiencing positive emotional states (such as satisfaction, excitement, interest, love) more than negative emotions (boredom, sadness, anxiety). According to (Bhatia, 2000) perceived job happiness is the job satisfaction of workers, reflecting the harmony between workers' perception of their needs and what they receive from their work. Diener (2000) defines feeling happy as the cognitive and emotional evaluation of people towards their lives. This broader definition includes satisfying experiences, low levels of negative emotional states, and

high levels of life satisfaction (Diener, 2000).

Seligman proposed that PERMA—Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment—constitutes the components of well-being (Seligman, 2011). Goodman and all provided compelling evidence supporting the idea that subjective well-being results from the integration of these elements, aligning with Seligman's hypothesis (Goodman, 2018).

2.2 Teacher's happiness

Teaching has been identified as one of the most stressful professions globally (Mohammadian, 2015); (Ghahramani, 2019) with workload commonly cited as a leading cause for teachers leaving the profession (Johnson, 2005). Workload refers to the extent to which an individual utilizes cognitive and physical resources to perform their job (Kun, 2022). It is a multidimensional and complex construct influenced by external task demands, psychological and organizational factors, and cognitive abilities (Weinger, 2004). The work environment encompasses physical, psychological, and social aspects, each of which can contribute to burnout (Kalimo, 1987), thereby adversely affecting both physical health and performance, as well as mental well-being and Occupational stressors have been shown to impact individuals' health and diminish their quality of life (Fox, 1999), (Mohammadian, 2015).

Fernandes (2009) a descriptive study employing a cross-sectional design to explore the influence of psychosocial factors on the quality of life of teachers in municipal schools in Natal, Brazil (Fernandes, 2009). A sample of 242 elementary school teachers participated in the study. The WHOQOL-bref was utilized to assess overall quality of life, alongside inquiries regarding the level of control and psychological demands of work using the Job Content Questionnaire

Damásio (2013) conducted a study to assess the levels of meaning in life (MIL), psychological well-being (PWB), and quality of life (QOL) in a large sample of 517 school teachers (174 men and 343 women, with an average age of 36.5 years, SD = 10.34), from 57 public and private schools in Campina Grande, Paraíba, Brazil. They aimed to examine the extent to which MIL could serve as a moderator variable in the relationship between PWB and overall QOL. The findings indicated that a significant proportion of teachers exhibited negative indices of MIL, PWB, and QOL. Inferential analyses revealed MIL as a predictive variable for both PWB and QOL. Moderation analysis revealed distinct correlations between PWB and QOL for individuals with high and low levels of MIL. Suggestions for future research and occupational health interventions are proposed (Damásio, 2013).

Ilanloo, H., Delavar, and all aimed to examine the impact of existential approach training on the quality of life and job satisfaction of junior high school teachers. A sample of 400 teachers from Takestan city during the academic year 2016-2017 was selected using the available sampling method and randomly assigned to either experimental or control groups. Data were collected using the WHO Quality of Life Questionnaire (WHOQOL-BREF) and Barry Fieldworth's Job Satisfaction Questionnaire. The findings revealed a significant improvement in teachers' quality of life following existential approach training ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, the training had a significant positive effect on teachers' job satisfaction ($p < 0.001$). Thus, it can be concluded that existential approach training effectively enhances both the quality of life and job satisfaction among teachers (Ilanloo, 2020).

Kun, A., & Gadanez, P. (2022), aimed to explore the correlation between teachers' psychological assets, as defined by psychological capital, workplace well-being, and perceived workplace happiness. Employing a mixed-method approach encompassing qualitative (open-ended questions) and quantitative (test battery) methodologies, the study delved into the interconnectedness of these variables (Kun A. &, 2022). Analysis of qualitative responses highlighted key components of teachers' workplace happiness, including goal fulfilment, feedback, finding purpose in their work, and social connections. Quantitative findings revealed a significant association between workplace well-being, happiness, and intrinsic psychological resources, particularly hope and optimism. These results suggest that future initiatives aimed at enhancing employee well-being should prioritize positive psychological elements and adopt a proactive approach. Practical

implications stemming from these findings are also discussed (Aryanti, 2020).

It is extremely necessary to propose programs to improve the sense of well-being for teachers in this age group. More specifically, the more positive emotions, fewer negative emotions, and greater satisfaction and sense of value at work, the more flourishing teachers will be in their roles (Moskowitz, 2021). Feeling happy during the teaching process plays a huge role in education and training and interacting with students where they teach, or in other words, happiness has a strong impact in teachers' professional activities (Bhatia, 2020), teacher happiness is one of the criteria to confirm their career satisfaction (Moskowitz, 2021).

Additionally, the more capable teachers are of adapting to their careers, the happier they feel. Therefore, to improve their sense of well-being, we can focus on enhancing the professional competence of teachers (Van Katwyk, 2000).

2.3 Vietnamese teachers' happiness

According to the research results of (Phan Thi Mai Huong., 2014) happiness is considered a subjective assessment of people's satisfaction and comfort with their lives. Satisfaction is also the most effective indicator of the quality of life and people's satisfaction with the work they are doing. Bui Van Van researched the happiness of officials at the University of Danang, Vietnam, showing that 21.1% of officials at the University of Danang are very happy (Bui Van Van, 2018). There are also some studies on happiness such as the happiness of Vietnamese people (Le Ngoc Van., 2019) student's happiness (Hoang Thi Trang., 2015) (Phan Thi Mai Huong, 2017).

Research on happy schools and teachers' mental health by authors Dang Thi Thu Trang and all revealed that teachers frequently experience symptoms of anxiety (55.4%), depression (53%), stress (33.9%), and exhaustion (36%) (Dang Thi Thu Trang, 2018).

Researching the current state of career happiness of middle school teachers in Nam Dinh province, Vietnam, during the implementation period of the 2018 General Education Program, author Pham Thi Hong Tham (2022) yielded the following results: teachers currently rate their job satisfaction at a relatively high level... (Pham Thi Hong Tham., 2018).

Factor and evaluation of happiness

The elements of happiness are Self-centeredness/Selflessness Happiness; anger, fear, jealousy, frustration also (Dambrun, 2017). Additionally, emotional intelligence, level of stress, and grade and type of personality are factors contributing to happiness (Dambrun, 2017), (Ghahramani, 2019). The intrinsic motivation, wage adequacy, extrinsic motivations, basic attributes, and work and organizational characteristics are also important factors influencing happiness (Fernandes, 2009).

Our research confirms that the factors contributing to happiness include motivations and meaning in work. Other factors identified in our study are professional identity, job competence, professional motivation, professional prospects, perceived fairness, job achievements, job happiness, teachers' professional identity, and teachers' teaching ability (Quinn, 2010); (Chen, 2022).

Based on the above research results, we build factors to evaluate teachers' happiness: confidence and self-worth; take pride in your work, love life and have positive emotions (Tei-Tominaga, 2021).

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants and procedure

The survey of 360 high school teachers in Da Nang City and QuangNam province was conducted based on three different training programs at University of Danang: formal training program, vocational training program, and continuing education training program. We sent the questionnaire by google form to 500 teachers. The survey period spanned from May 2023 to August 2023. We received 360 responses which meet the research requirements.

3.2 Instruments

There are many tests to evaluate happiness. For instance, Diener et al. (1985) developed The Satisfaction With Life Scale with 5 items (Diener E. E., 1985). Later, Michael Argyle and Peter Hills proposed a test for research on happiness that includes 29 items (Hills, 2002). More recently, the PERMA 23 test by (Seligman, 2011) defines well-being in 23 items across five pillars: Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (Martin Seligman., 2018).

In this study, we utilized the happiness scale developed by Phan Thi Mai Huong and colleagues (2019), which was constructed based on the authors' questionnaires (Phan Thi Mai Huong, D., 2019). This scale comprises 3 indicators composed by 18 items, categorized as follows: negative emotions for work (4 items); positive emotions at work (4 items); feeling satisfied and valued at work (10 items). The test employs a 5-point Likert scale ranging from completely incorrect to right. Higher scores on the positive emotions and satisfaction subscale indicate greater satisfaction and value in the work of the survey subjects, while lower scores on the negative emotion subscale suggest fewer negative emotions experienced by the subjects.

We also used the teacher's career adaptation scale developed by (Vu Phuong Lien, 2018). This test comprises 4 indicators composed by 45 criteria, including (1) inquiry capacity, (2) confidence capacity, (3) caring capacity, and (4) occupational control capacity. The scale is designed with a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (I do not have this ability at all) to 5 (This ability is performed very well by me). The investigation focused on the relationship between adaptation and perceived well-being, proposing measures to enhance feelings of well-being.

3.3 Data analyses

In a first step, we have analysed the impact of demographics variable on career adaptation and on the emotion at work. In a second step, we have analysed the impact of career adaptation variables on the emotion at work. We tested the indicators as well as the variables composing them. We used T-Students analysis for bimodal variables and ANOVAs for multimodal variables. We checked beforehand that all the conditions for applying these analyses were met (normal distributions and equality of variances).

4. Results

After presenting the characteristics of our sample with demographic variables, we present the results in terms of indicators: three about emotions at work and four about professional abilities. Then, we present the results about the components of these indicators and their significative effects.

4.1 Profile of respondents

Table 1 presents our respondents' demographic variables: gender, age, work experience, and level of education. Our sample is mainly composed of female teachers between 31 and 50 years old, which seems to be representative of our classroom and the profession. Also, most of our respondent have a baccalaureate degree in education, which is required to become a teacher.

Table 1: Level of education, Gender, Age, Working time of respondents.

Level of education	<BA	6%
	BA	61.1%
	>BA	38.3%
Gender	Women	76.1%
	Men	23.9%

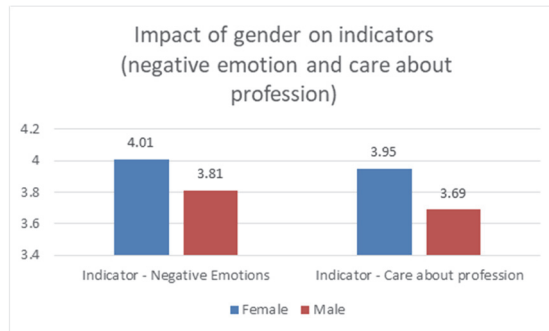
Age	<30y.o	17.2%
	31-50 y.o	69.7%
	>50y.o	13.1%
Working time	<10 years	33.3%
	from 11- 20 years	47.5%
	> 20 years	19.2%

4.2 Gender effect on indicators and detailed variables

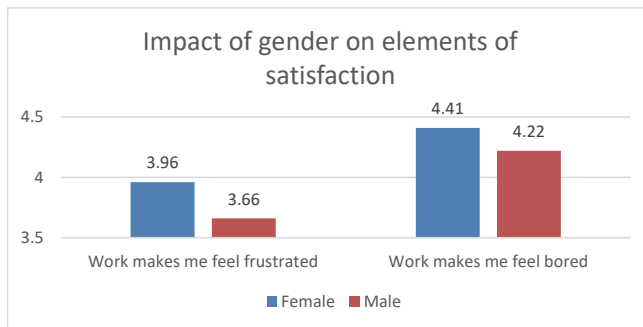
We have only found statistical effects of gender on the indicators “negative emotions” ($t=3.08$; $N=360$; $p=0.002$) and “care about profession” ($t=3.08$; $N=360$; $p=0.002$). In both cases, women experience more negative emotions and care more about the profession than men (Graphic 1). We did not find any effect of years of experience, age, or education on these indicators, nor any other demographic effects on other indicators.

After testing the effect of gender on the indicators, we tested the effect of gender on all the variables that compose them. Regarding the variable about emotion at work, we found significant effects of gender on the feeling of frustration ($t=2.97$; $N=360$; $p=0.003$) and on the boring aspect of the work ($t=2.86$; $N=360$; $p=0.005$). In both cases, women have higher means than men (Graphic 2).

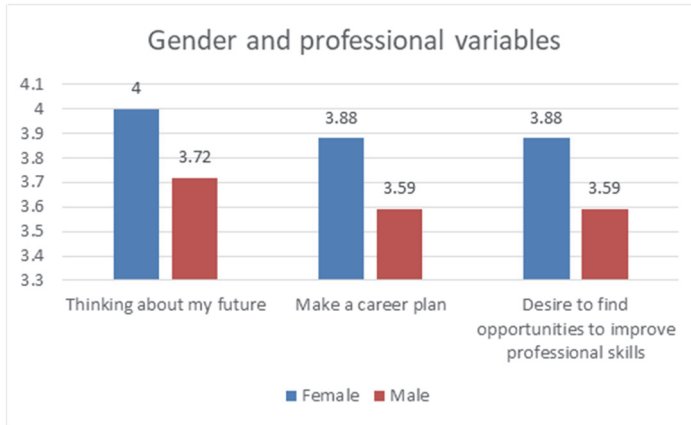
Regarding the variables that compose the professional indicator “care about the profession,” we have noticed three significant effects: on thinking about the future ($t=2.71$; $N=360$; $p=0.007$), making a career plan ($t=2.86$; $N=360$; $p=0.005$), and finding opportunities to improve skills ($t=2.86$; $N=360$; $p=0.005$). For these three aspects of the profession, women have higher means than men (Graphic 3).



Graphic 1: Statistical effects of Gender on “negative emotion” and “care about the profession” indicators.



Graphic 2: Statistical effects of Gender on negative emotion variables.

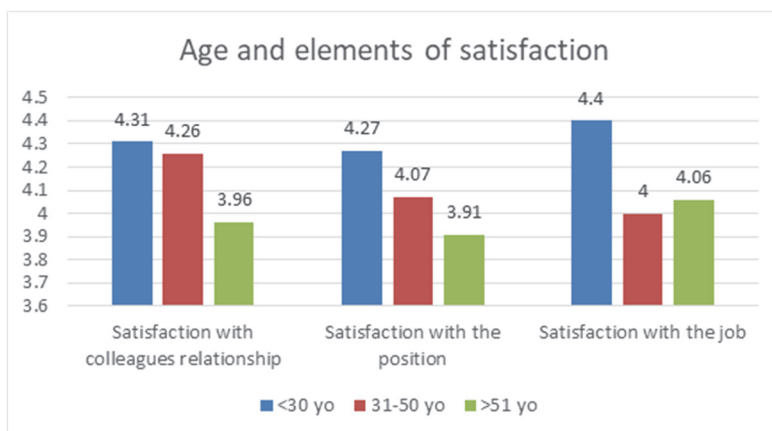


Graphic 3: Statistical effects of Gender on Care about profession variables.

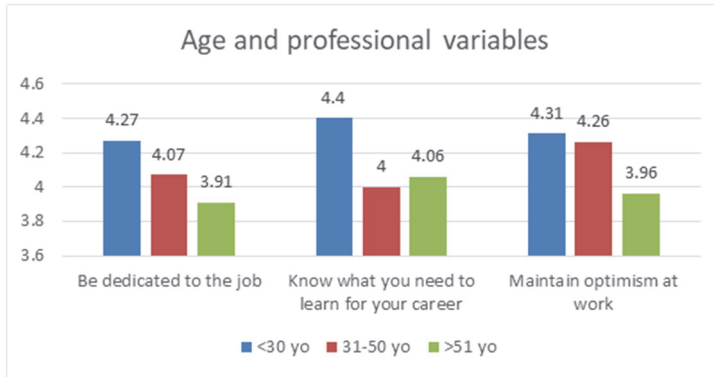
4.3 Age effect on indicators and detailed variables

We did not find any effect of age or other demographic variables on the indicators. However, we found significant effects of age on the variables related to satisfaction and value at work. Older teachers have less satisfaction with colleagues' relationships ($F=4.29$; $N=360$; $p=0.014$). Additionally, as age increases, satisfaction with one's position decreases ($F=3.46$; $N=360$; $p=0.032$), and the youngest teachers have more satisfaction with their jobs than others ($F=7.62$; $N=360$; $p=0.001$). The details are shown in Graphic 4.

Regarding significant effects of age on professional variables, we found that the older the teachers are, the less dedicated they are to the job ($F=3.46$; $N=360$; $p=0.032$). Additionally, the youngest teachers are more knowledgeable about their careers than others ($F=4.05$; $N=360$; $p=0.001$). Finally, the oldest teachers are less optimistic at work than others ($F=4.29$; $N=360$; $p=0.014$). These results are shown in Graphic 5.



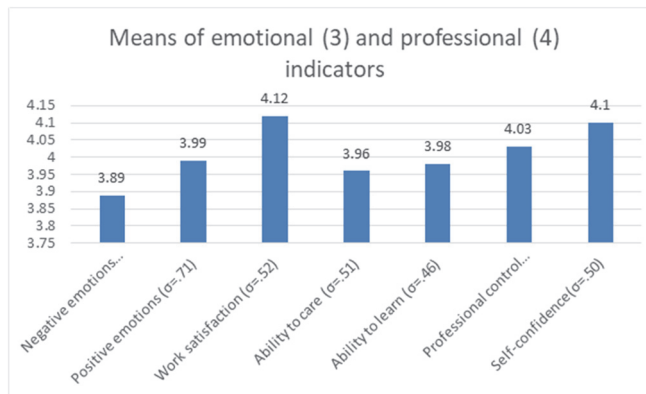
Graphic 4: Statistical effects of Age on Satisfaction variables.



Graphic 5: Statistical effects of Age on professional variables.

4.4 Effects between emotional and professional indicators

Finally, we tested the relationships between emotional and professional indicators. Graphic 6 shows the descriptive statistics. We notice that work satisfaction is the highest indicator of emotional well-being, and self-confidence is the highest professional indicator.



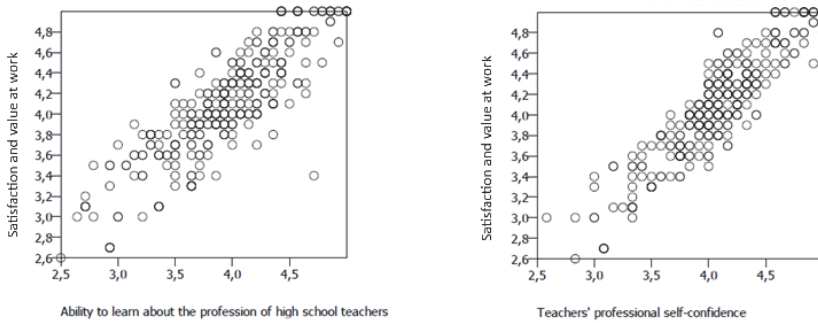
Graphic 6: Descriptive statistics about emotional and professional indicators.

A linear regression was conducted to evaluate the effect of professional indicators on emotional indicators. The results show a significant relationship between the professional indicators “ability to learn about the profession” and “teachers’ self-confidence” and the emotional indicator “satisfaction and value at work” ($R^2 = 0.87$, $F(2, 360) = 1179.98$, $p < 0.001$). The regression coefficients (β) are 0.29 for the ability to learn and 0.76 for self-confidence, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Model of Linear Regression about effects of professional indicators on satisfaction and value indicator.

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-Value	p-value
(Constant)	-0.14	0.9	-1.60	.110
Ability to learn about the profession	0.29	0.4	7.31	.000
Professional self-confidence	0.76	0.4	17.5	.000

The regression demonstrates a significant association between the ability to learn about the profession and the satisfaction and value at work, and a more significant association between the professional self-confidence and the satisfaction and value at work, as seen in Graphic 7.



Graphic 7: Effects of ability to learn and self-confidence on satisfaction and value at work.

5. Discussion and Recommendations

Research on teacher happiness is considered important in the context of the current transformation of the educational mechanism in Vietnam.

Happiness is a positive emotional state of humans when their needs are satisfied. Happiness is an abstract emotional framework and is often influenced by reason. Each person has their own definition of happiness, but they all refer to feelings of joy, comfort, and joy in life. That's why people spend their whole lives searching for happiness and doing what they love to achieve happiness.

Research on happiness in China and points out the assessment of subjective happiness (abbreviated as SWB) conducted by the Association China by the International Wellbeing Group (abbreviated as IWBG, founded in 2001, headed by Professor Robert Cummins, of the Australian Center for Quality of Life (ACQOL), Deakin University) . This is an expert organization with members in 50 countries, including 3 groups: (1) researchers group; (2) central and local officials; (3) review group to coordinate with each other in the stages of research on human happiness (Davey, 2012).

Research on lecturers, results show that factors related to happiness are economy, income, and management style of teachers. scientific research activities at all levels; emotional health and daily work in charge; relationships with people (Ahumada-Tello, 2024).

In general, the problem of feeling happy in the workplace has been studied by many authors worldwide from various perspectives. However, in Vietnam, this issue is still quite new, with only general research available and not much in-depth study on specific aspects of teachers' work, (Pham Thi Hong Tham., 2018), (Phan Thi Mai Huong N. T., 2017)

Through these initial situational studies, we can assess the overall picture and identify appropriate impact measures. These preliminary figures show that teachers over the age of 50 have a higher sense of happiness than those under 30. Female teachers report higher levels of satisfaction and value in their work compared to male teachers. However, teachers under 30 years old are young educators who represent potential human resources critical for the long-term development of students. Therefore, helping teachers under the age of 30 improve their sense of well-being is essential for fostering long-term commitment and dedication to education. This result is also unclear from other results around the world, because they are not compared by age, however, these results were similar women were more satisfied (Salavera C. &, 2021).

So in all totality our research, the results indicate that all the teachers in our sample are

generally happy, it means that teachers are evaluating their lives as good and stable (Macuka, 2017), this result is gratifying, because only happy teachers have happy students (Li, 2021).

Research also shows that women are less happy than men. Women are more frustrated and bored at work compared to men. Several studies (Ainley and Carstens, 2018) have shown that teachers are exposed to different risk and protective factors depending on their school level, and there are gender differences in health prevention and intervention (Gyllensten, 2005; Hiller, 2017). Our research shows that women think more about their future, their career plans, and seek more opportunities to improve their skills. This seems to align with the findings of Archibong (2010). Another interpretation could be that women lead busier lives. As a participant started: *"Women have more tasks than men, as they manage household duties, care for children, and fulfil school obligations. They strive to complete everything. In contrast, male teachers do not face the same level of concern as their female counterparts"*. This global distribution of tasks may explain the difference in happiness at work.

There are many effects on teachers' feelings of happiness, from the age factor, the seniors have less job satisfaction, in terms of relationships with colleagues, satisfaction with their position, and their job in general. The same results are presentation by (Wang, 2022); (Hollett, 2021) (Geary, 2019). In our results, the older teachers are less dedicated to their work, know less about what is necessary for their careers, and are less optimistic at work, and we can see the same in (Mota A. F., 2021) and (Alrubaiee, 2020) research. On 52 years old participant provided a link between this knowledge of career, and the level of happiness: *"I have worked for nearly 30 years and have experience in teaching and helping students. I worry about the group of young teachers who are just starting their careers. I'm afraid that they will make many mistakes, just like I did in the past"*.

The significance of this study are two variables that best predict satisfaction and value at work are the ability to learn about the profession and self-confidence; it has uniformity with the Jackson research about teaching satisfaction (Jackson, 2022), (Beutel, 2023).

6. Implications

1. After years influenced by war, from 1975 - when the country was liberated - Vietnam has overcome many difficulties and challenges, achieving significant historical milestones. Vietnam has moved beyond underdevelopment to become one of the developing countries with average income. However, its economic achievements are still unstable, and the quality of human resources and competitiveness of the economy remain inadequate. Cultural environment also faces many limitations, lacking essential elements for rapid and sustainable development. In general, Vietnam is seen as a country striving for development, still facing global challenges such as climate change, resource depletion, environmental pollution, ecological imbalance, and political and social fluctuations.
2. To ensure sustainable development, many countries have continuously innovated education, improving the quality of human resources, equipping future generations with a solid cultural foundation and high adaptability to all natural and social changes. Educational innovation has become an urgent need and a global trend.
3. In this context, the 8th Conference of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam (XI term) passed Resolution No. 29/NQ-TW on November 4, 2013, on comprehensive and fundamental education and training reforms to meet the requirements of industrialization, modernization under a socialist-oriented market economy and international integration. The National Assembly issued Resolution No. 88/2014/QH13 on November 28, 2014, on renovating the curriculum and textbooks of general education, contributing to fundamental and comprehensive educational reforms. On March 27, 2015, the Prime Minister issued Decision No. 404/QĐ-TTg approving the project to renew the curriculum and textbooks of general education (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018).
4. The objective of educational innovation as stipulated in Resolution No. 88/2014/QH13 of the

National Assembly aims to "fundamentally and comprehensively renovate the curriculum and textbooks of general education to enhance the quality and effectiveness of general education; integrate literacy education, human development, and career orientation; contribute to transforming education from knowledge transmission to comprehensive development in terms of morality, intellect, physique, aesthetics, and fully exploit the potential of each student".

5. Implementing resolutions of the Party, the National Assembly, and decisions of the Prime Minister, the new general education program is designed to develop students' qualities and capacities. It creates a learning environment and training that helps students develop harmoniously in physical and mental aspects, becoming active learners who are confident, adept at applying active learning methods to master fundamental knowledge and skills. They are conscious in career choices and lifelong learning, possess good qualities and necessary competencies to become responsible citizens, cultured workers who are diligent, creative, and able to meet personal development needs and the demands of nation-building in the era of globalization and the new industrial revolution.
6. Comparing with the 2006 education program, Vietnam's 2028 education program has completely transformed the role of teachers. To effectively implement the 2018 education program, in addition to focusing on curriculum development, there is a need to enhance the capabilities of teachers. Teachers need to be proactive and creative in their methods and teaching approaches, actively accessing new resources. Teachers can only be effective when they are happy in their work and personal lives (Dinh Thi Kim Thoa (editor), 2019).
7. This study has implications for the need to improve teachers' sense of happiness to achieve the goals of the 2018 education program in Vietnam, such as organizing training programs for teachers on skills to feel happiness; happiness; actively at work; creativity in teaching; planning work and rest. Our results suggest that women teachers need a better distribution of tasks or greater recognition of the inequitable distribution. This could be an important consideration in the promotion system. Both older and younger teachers need to be better informed about career possibilities, and more career opportunities should be developed.

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Acknowledgements, avoiding identifying any of the authors prior to peer review

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