



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Mediating Role of Life Satisfaction in the Relationship between the Lifelong Learning Tendencies of Teachers and Their Attitudes toward Teaching

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates whether life satisfaction serves as a mediator in the relationship between the lifelong learning tendencies of teachers and their professional attitudes toward teaching. The sample of the study comprised 361 teachers, and data were collected using instruments measuring tendencies toward lifelong learning, attitudes toward the profession of teaching, and overall life satisfaction. The data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS Version 27 and Process Macro 4.1 programs, employing independent-samples t-tests, Pearson's correlation analyses, and mediation analysis models. There were significant positive relationships among lifelong learning, life satisfaction, and professional attitudes. Female teachers demonstrated a higher tendency toward lifelong learning than male teachers, consistent with previous research suggesting women are more inclined toward self-improvement. However, no significant gender-based differences were observed in life satisfaction, indicating that professional satisfaction may be shaped more by individual experiences than by gender. Furthermore, life satisfaction was identified as a mediator, suggesting that teachers with high lifelong learning tendencies and life satisfaction levels displayed more positive professional attitudes. These results underscored the importance of promoting lifelong learning and the well-being of teachers to enhance job satisfaction and commitment. Educational policymakers are encouraged to develop structured lifelong learning programs and wellness initiatives to support the professional growth of teachers.

A Japanese proverb says, "teaching is learning". This saying suits the profession of teaching the best, because teaching is one of the main professions where learning while teaching and self-improvement in this process are essential. Considering that the age we live in is called the information age and that the greatest power in this age is knowledge, it is unthinkable for teachers not to improve themselves. In a world that is constantly renewing, changing, and developing, the teacher has to constantly improve themselves. For education to be successful, innovative, and developmental and catch up with the era, students need to be equipped with the motivation to learn. The primary person who will give this capacity to the student is the teacher. The teacher must first of all have a sense of curiosity and a love of learning so that they can transfer these characteristics to their students. One of the best examples of how education develops and changes societies is the case of Finland. Under the leadership of Johan Vilhelm Snellman, described in Gregory Petrov's book "In the Land of

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White Lilies", Finland made a great breakthrough with revolutionary changes in the field of education. The Finnish example showed that education is the first condition and initiator of development, transformation, and progress. In fact, long before the Finnish example, it was well-known that the opening and expansion of universities in Europe with the Renaissance and the emphasis on philosophy, art, and science changed the fate of countries to a great extent. Atatürk, too, wanted to start a Turkish Renaissance that would begin in Turkey and then inspire the entire eastern world. In line with Atatürk's vision, the Village Institutes were established, and Hasan Ali Yücel was appointed as the Minister of National Education, aiming to revolutionize Turkey's educational framework (Öztürk, 2015). The presence of solid, disciplined, and scientifically grounded educational systems in today's developed, modern countries helps us better understand why Atatürk placed such importance on education a century ago, with a view toward future progress (Çetin, 2018). These educational initiatives were the result of Atatürk's foresight and aimed to create a foundational structure for Turkey's advancement in education (Gökçe, 2020).

For education to remain progressive, developmental, and innovative, teachers should adopt a lifelong learning approach, which emphasizes a continuous commitment to self-improvement and learning (Smith, 2019; Gür Erdoğan & Arsal, 2016; Yılmaz, 2016). Lifelong learning is broadly defined as a process through which individuals enhance and apply knowledge and skills that they have accumulated over a lifetime (Candy, 1994; Rausch, 2003; Aspin & Chapman, 2000). Demirel (2008) further described this concept as a process that cultivates one's capacities and competencies throughout life. Those inclined toward lifelong learning tend to approach their educational goals selectively and strategically, drawing knowledge eclectically from diverse fields and employing effective learning strategies (Knapper & Cropley, 2000).

Information in the literature on continuous learning tendencies reveals that teachers are strongly devoted to maintaining learning across their lifespan (Yaman, 2014; Şahin & Arcagök, 2014; Yılmaz, 2016). Many studies have indicated that prospective teachers (Demirel & Akkoyunlu, 2010; Karakuş, 2013) and instructors (Konokman & Yelken, 2014) also display strong lifelong learning tendencies. Additionally, Konokman and Yelken (2014) found that female instructors demonstrated significantly higher lifelong learning tendencies than their male counterparts. Similarly, Yılmaz (2016) observed that the lifelong learning tendencies of teachers increased significantly with years of experience in the profession.

The high levels of tendencies toward lifelong learning among teachers can be attributed to the comprehensive and continuous education they receive, which equips them with essential skills and competencies throughout their careers. Başbay, Ünvar, and Bümen (2009) emphasized that beyond imparting sufficient knowledge and skills, fostering positive affective attitudes toward the profession is critical for training qualified teachers. Studies on attitudes toward the profession of teaching have revealed that individuals who choose teaching eagerly exhibit a more positive affective and behavioral orientation toward the profession (Bilgin, 1996; Üstün et al., 2004; Üstün, 2007). It was shown that the attitudes of teachers toward their profession were closely linked to the type of teacher they were likely to become (Seferoğlu, 2004). Similarly, Çam and Üstün (2016) found that a significant and positive association between the approaches of educators to lifelong learning and their professional attitudes toward teaching.

An essential factor for personal development is a genuine enjoyment of life which is closely tied to happiness and life satisfaction (Diener, 2000; Veenhoven, 1996a). Life satisfaction is widely studied in positive psychology and has various definitions. Diener and Suh (1997) defined it as a general assessment of quality of life according to one's criteria. Rice, Frone, and McFarlin (1992) described it as an overall attitude toward life. Haybron (2004) framed it as the balance between aspirations and achievements, while Veenhoven (1996a) considered it simply quality of life. In the existing literature, life satisfaction is commonly regarded as the cognitive dimension of subjective well-being, representing the evaluative perceptions of individuals regarding their own lives (Diener, 1984). Subjective well-being is generally conceptualized through three main elements: experiencing positive emotions, minimizing or lacking negative emotions, and the personal assessment of life satisfaction. While emotional states reflect the affective aspect of well-being, life satisfaction pertains to the cognitive and evaluative domain (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Various factors influence one's sense of life satisfaction, including socioeconomic factors such as income, professional and social standing, access to opportunities and social mobility, living standards, governmental policies, and the quality of personal relationships and one's immediate environment (Appleton & Song, 2008).

Studies on life satisfaction have examined its relationship to various psychological and social factors, such as emotional intelligence (Castilho et al., 2017) and depressive symptoms (Castilho et al., 2017; Moksnes et al., 2014). Other variables include trait anger (Topbaşoğlu-Altan & Çivitçi, 2017), stress (Holinka, 2015), socioeconomic status (Boo, Yen, & Lim, 2016; Yıkılmaz & Demir-Güdül, 2015), psychological resilience, self-understanding (Alibekiroğlu et al., 2018), and school climate (Uz-Baş & Yurdabakan, 2017). In addition to these factors, life satisfaction may also influence professional attitudes and tendencies toward lifelong learning, as these aspects contribute to a person's overall sense of fulfillment and motivation in various domains, including their professional life.

As seen in the literature, life satisfaction is a phenomenon that impacts attitudes toward life, the environment, one's profession, and cognitive self-development. This multidimensional influence suggests that life satisfaction could play a crucial role in shaping the professional approaches of individuals, particularly in fields like education, where continuous self-improvement and a commitment to learning are essential.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to investigate the relationship between lifelong learning tendencies and attitudes toward the profession of teaching, with a specific focus on the mediating role of life satisfaction in teachers. By examining this relationship, it will be possible to clarify whether teachers with a high tendency for lifelong learning also exhibit positive attitudes toward their profession and if life satisfaction serves as a link between these two variables. This investigation is particularly relevant in the context of educational development, as understanding these factors can contribute to enhanced professional motivation and instructional effectiveness among teachers.

## Methodology

In this study, a predictive correlational research design, in the context of quantitative research methods, was utilized to examine whether life satisfaction served as a mediating variable in the relationship between the lifelong learning tendencies of teachers and their attitudes toward the profession of teaching. As Creswell (2012) emphasized, this type of design seeks not only to determine relationships among variables but also to predict the value of one variable based on the other.

## Participants

This study included a total of 361 teachers, comprising 177 female and 184 male teachers who were selected using the convenience sampling method. The data were collected cross-sectionally from teachers who voluntarily participated in the study over a period of approximately one month between May and June 2022. Data collection took place online via the Google Forms and Google Classroom platforms. Table 1 displays the demographic characteristics of the participants.

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Group	n	%
Gender	Female	177	49
	Male	184	51
	Total	361	100
Teaching Area	Primary School Teacher	132	36.6
	Subject Teacher	229	63.4
	Total	361	100
Years of Experience	1-5	13	3.6
	6-10	46	12.7
	11-15	70	19.4
	16-20	83	23.0
	21 or above	149	41.3
	Total	361	100

As shown in Table 1, 177 participants (49%) were female, while 184 participants (51%) were male. It was

determined that 132 participants (36.6%) were form teachers, and 229 (63.4%) were subject teachers. The professional experience of 13 participants (3.6%) was between 1 and 5 years, while 46 participants (12.7%) had 6 to 10 years of experience, 70 (19.4%) had 11 to 15 years of experience, 83 (23%) had 16 to 20 years of experience, and 149 participants (41.3%) reported having 21 years or more of experience.

### Instruments

**Lifelong Learning Tendency Scale (LLTS):** This scale, originally developed by Gür Erdoğan and Arsal (2016), is a 5-point Likert-type instrument comprising 17 items. It encompasses two dimensions: “eagerness to learn” (items 1-11) and “openness to development” (items 12-17). The developers reported a criterion validity coefficient of .71. The internal consistency of the scale was established with a Cronbach’s alpha value of .86 and a McDonald’s omega ( $\omega$ ) value of .89. The reliability of the scale was reassessed in the sample of this study, yielding a Cronbach’s alpha of .93.

**Attitude towards Teaching Profession Scale (ATTPS):** This scale, developed by Kahramanoğlu et al. (2018), includes 12 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale and is structured as a single-factor measure. In the original study, the instrument yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .85, demonstrating acceptable internal consistency. In this study, the reliability analysis revealed a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .84.

**Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS):** This scale, introduced by Diener et al. (1985) and adapted into Turkish by Dağlı and Baysal (2016), is composed of 5 items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale is unidimensional and does not contain any items requiring inverse scoring. In its Turkish adaptation, the instrument demonstrated a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .88 (Dağlı & Baysal, 2016), reflecting sound psychometric properties. In this study, the measure of internal reliability was recalculated and found to be .88, mirroring the original reliability level.

### Data Analysis

To determine the appropriate statistical techniques for data analysis, first, normality assumptions were assessed. As suggested by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), skewness and kurtosis values falling within the  $\pm 1.5$  range and being close to zero are indicative of a normal distribution. In this study, the dependent variable—attitudes toward the profession of teaching—had a skewness coefficient of .051 and a kurtosis coefficient of  $-.957$ . The independent variable, lifelong learning, exhibited a skewness coefficient of  $-.006$  and a kurtosis coefficient of  $-.451$ . The mediating variable, life satisfaction, showed a skewness coefficient of  $-.133$  and a kurtosis coefficient of  $-.595$ . All variables demonstrated skewness and kurtosis values within the acceptable thresholds for normality. Additionally, multicollinearity was not present among the independent variables, and no outliers exceeding a standardized value of 3.3 were identified. Upon verifying that assumptions for parametric analyses were met, the data were analyzed using IBM SPSS version 27 and PROCESS Macro version 4.1.

### Results

To examine whether tendencies toward lifelong learning, life satisfaction, and attitudes toward the profession of teaching varied based on gender, an independent-samples t-test was performed (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Independent-Samples t-Test Results for Gender Differences in Lifelong Learning, Life Satisfaction, and Attitudes toward the Profession of Teaching

Variables	Groups	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohen’s d</i>
LLTS	Female	177	74.12	7.21	355.23*	3.44	.000	.36
	Male	184	71.59	6.76				
SWLS	Female	177	14.42	3.94	359	.67	.498	
	Male	184	14.12	4.40				
ATTPS	Female	177	51.75	4.79	359	2.91	.004	.30
	Male	184	50.21	5.21				

Note: Degrees of freedom reported when variances are not homogeneous. LLTS = Lifelong Learning Tendency Scale; SWLS = Satisfaction with Life Scale; ATTPS = Attitude towards Teaching Profession Scale.

As seen in Table 2, a statistically significant difference was found in the lifelong learning attitudes of the participants based on gender,  $t(355.23) = 3.44$ ,  $p < .001$ . This result suggested that women had higher levels of lifelong learning tendencies than men. The effect size (Cohen's  $d = .36$ ) indicated a small difference between the groups.

No statistically significant difference was found in life satisfaction levels between the male and female participants,  $t(359) = .67$ ,  $p = .498$ , suggesting that gender did not have a substantial impact on life satisfaction in this sample.

On the other hand, a statistically significant difference was observed in attitudes toward the profession of teaching based on gender,  $t(359) = 2.91$ ,  $p = .004$ . The ATTPS scores of the female participants were significantly higher than those of the male participants, with a small effect size (Cohen's  $d = .30$ ), indicating slightly more positive attitudes toward the profession of teaching among women.

### Relationships between Life Satisfaction, Lifelong Learning Tendencies, and Attitudes toward the Profession of Teaching

To analyze the associations among the life satisfaction levels of the participants, their lifelong learning tendencies, and their attitudes toward the profession of teaching, Pearson's correlation coefficient was employed. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 3.

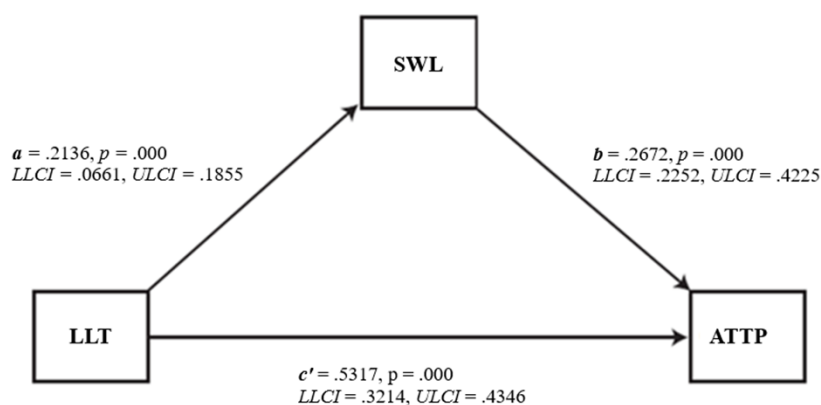
**Table 3.** Pearson's Correlation Analysis for the Relationships between Lifelong Learning Tendencies, Attitudes toward the Profession of Teaching, and Life Satisfaction

	LLTS	ATTPS	SWLS
LLTS	1		
ATTPS	.59**	1	
SWLS	.21**	.38**	1

There was a significant positive relationship between lifelong learning tendencies and attitude towards the profession of teaching ( $r = .59$ ,  $p < .001$ ). As the LLTS scores of the participants increased, their ATTPS scores also increased. A significant positive relationship was also found between tendencies toward lifelong learning and life satisfaction ( $r = .21$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that higher tendencies toward lifelong learning were associated with a higher level of satisfaction with life. Finally, there was a significant positive relationship between life satisfaction and attitudes towards the profession of teaching ( $r = .38$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that as life satisfaction increased, attitudes toward the profession of teaching improved.

The results of the analyses examining the mediating role of life satisfaction in the relationship between lifelong learning tendencies and attitudes toward the profession of teaching are presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Model Diagram of the Mediating Role of Life Satisfaction in the Relationship between Lifelong Learning Tendencies and Attitudes toward the Profession of Teaching



In path a in Figure 1, it is observed that lifelong learning tendencies had a positive predictive effect on life satisfaction ( $\beta = .2136$ , 95% CI [.0661, .1885],  $p = .000$ ). Similarly, in path b, it is observed that the mediator variable positively predicted the dependent variable ( $\beta = .2672$ , 95% CI [.2252, .4225],  $p = .000$ ). Finally, in path c, it is observed that the independent variable positively predicted the dependent variable ( $\beta = .5317$ , 95% CI [.3214, .4346],  $p = .000$ ). The results of the analyses regarding the significance of the indirect relationships showing the mediation effect in the model are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Bootstrap Analysis Results for the Significance of Indirect Effects

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Mediating Variable</i>	<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient of Path (<math>\beta</math>)</i>	<i>% 95 CI Bias Corrected</i>
LLTS	SWLS	ATTPS	.0571	[.0284, .0900]

Note:  $\beta$  = Standardized beta coefficient.

The significance of the indirect effect of lifelong learning tendencies on attitudes toward the profession of teaching was analyzed using confidence intervals obtained with the bootstrap technique. The analysis indicated that the indirect effect was statistically significant. In other words, life satisfaction was found to mediate the relationship between lifelong learning tendencies and attitudes toward the profession of teaching ( $\beta = .0571$ , 95% CI [.0284, .0900]).

### Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined whether life satisfaction served as a mediating factor in the relationship between the lifelong learning tendencies of teachers and their attitudes toward the profession of teaching. The results provided nuanced insights into gender-related variations across lifelong learning tendencies, life satisfaction levels, and professional attitudes, revealing that life satisfaction may act as a partial intermediary in these associations. Interpreted in light of previous research, these results offer a distinctive theoretical contribution to the literature concerning these interrelated constructs.

One notable result was that female teachers demonstrated significantly higher lifelong learning tendencies than their male colleagues. This aligned with earlier studies such as those conducted by Coşkun and Demirel (2012) and Evin Gencil (2013), which suggested that women tended to engage more actively in self-development and adaptive behaviors. Such differences may be contextualized within Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987), which proposes that societal norms often encourage women to adopt roles emphasizing growth and nurturing. Nevertheless, studies like those of Çam and Üstün (2016) and Karaoğlu Yılmaz and Binay Eyüboğlu (2018), which found no significant gender-related differences in this variable, highlighted the role of contextual and institutional variables in shaping lifelong learning tendencies and called attention to the necessity of conducting comparative and cross-cultural research.

In the context of life satisfaction, no significant gender-related differences emerged in this study, corroborating findings by Şahin (2008), Atasoy (2014), and Akgün (2015). Life satisfaction, as a comprehensive evaluation of one's quality of life, tends to reflect individual experiences rather than demographic traits such as gender. Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) posits that the fulfillment of personal goals underpins life satisfaction. Within professional settings such as teaching—where intrinsic motivation is a central element—gender-neutral levels of life satisfaction are expected, suggesting that individual factors outweigh gender-based effects.

Another key outcome was that female teachers expressed more favorable attitudes toward the profession of teaching compared to male teachers in this study. This result was consistent with previous findings by Aydın and Sağlam (2012), Çapa and Çil (2000), and Oral (2004). Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) offers a framework to interpret this pattern, asserting that individuals develop more positive attitudes toward roles that align with their internalized values and social expectations. The profession of teaching may resonate more strongly with women due to both intrinsic motivations and cultural factors, implying that professional development initiatives should be sensitive to such gender-based motivational dynamics.



In this study, a positive association between lifelong learning tendencies and attitudes toward the profession of teaching was also identified. This result was in agreement with the conclusions of Alt and Raichel (2020), who argued that continued learning nurtures a more engaged and optimistic professional stance. According to Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (1997), critical reflection—cultivated through lifelong learning—can reshape perceptions and attitudes, thereby enhancing the professional engagement of educators. These insights underscore the need for institutional strategies and policies that cultivate a culture of lifelong learning to strengthen both teacher satisfaction and instructional quality (Arinaitwe, 2021).

Moreover, a significant link was established between lifelong learning and life satisfaction. This outcome was in line with foundational research by Shin and Johnson (1978) and Diener et al. (1985), which emphasized that sustained learning promoted personal growth and a sense of achievement. Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) suggests that accomplishing self-determined objectives contributes meaningfully to one's well-being. Teachers who actively pursue learning may derive deeper fulfillment from their roles, enhancing both their sense of meaning and life satisfaction. Furthermore, the relationships they foster with students may further amplify their sense of purpose and emotional well-being.

An additional contribution of this study lies in revealing the influence of life satisfaction on professional attitudes. The participants reporting higher levels of life satisfaction appeared more likely to embrace their professional roles with enthusiasm and commitment. From the perspective of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1966), intrinsic motivators such as achievement and recognition are vital to job satisfaction, which in turn reinforces overall well-being. This observation highlights the importance of enhancing the well-being of teachers as a means of strengthening professional identity and commitment.

In conclusion, the results of this study suggested that life satisfaction may function as a partial mediator between lifelong learning tendencies and professional attitudes among teachers. The ability to maintain an ongoing learning tendency appears to indirectly enhance professional attitudes by fostering greater life satisfaction. In this sense, life satisfaction operates as a psychological bridge that connects the continuous learning engagement of teachers with their dedication to their profession.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The results of this study offer valuable guidance for educational policymakers and school administrators. Cultivating a culture of lifelong learning among teachers appears to be a promising pathway to strengthening both their professional attitudes and job satisfaction. To this end, well-structured professional development initiatives—such as training modules on innovative pedagogical approaches or peer mentoring systems—can serve to enhance the competencies of teachers while simultaneously supporting their psychological engagement with the profession. These practices resonate with the principles of Vygotsky's Social Development Theory (1978), which highlights the importance of social interaction in learning processes. Creating environments that encourage collaboration and shared professional growth may thus contribute meaningfully to the development of teachers.

Beyond skill enhancement, improving the overall well-being of teachers is crucial for promoting a positive professional outlook. Interventions like flexible scheduling, psychological counseling services, and wellness-based institutional policies may help educators maintain a healthier work-life balance and greater emotional resilience. Notwithstanding, the success of such initiatives depends on acknowledging practical constraints, such as limited funding or structural resistance within institutions. Effective planning and sustained administrative support are therefore necessary to ensure the long-term viability of these efforts.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, the results of this study underscore the interconnected roles of lifelong learning and life satisfaction in shaping the professional attitudes of teachers. Educators who actively engage in continuous learning not only report greater fulfillment in their personal lives but also tend to adopt a more constructive and committed approach to their profession. As such, nurturing lifelong learning habits and addressing teacher well-being should be central priorities within educational institutions. These dual emphases can help cultivate a teaching workforce that is both highly motivated and resilient in the face of professional demands. Future

studies may build on these findings by examining the sustained impact of lifelong learning on the well-being of teachers and exploring other potential mediators and moderators that influence the development of professional attitudes over time.

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