The Mediating Role of Life Satisfaction in The Relationship Between Status Anxiety and Professional Motivation Among Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the mediating role of life satisfaction in the relationship between teachers' status concerns and professional motivation. This research is important because it can present findings to improve and increase teachers' professional motivation in line with the data obtained by examining how status anxiety, which negatively affects teachers' professional and individual development, has an effect on their professional motivation and how life satisfaction mediates this effect. The research was conducted with teachers using a quantitative method based on a correlational survey model. The study group consisted of 253 teachers (165 female and 88 male) working in public schools in the Central Black Sea Region. The teachers were selected through convenience sampling. Data collection tools in the study include the Status Anxiety Scale, the Teacher Professional Motivation Scale, the Life Satisfaction Scale and the personal information form developed by the researcher. The relationships between the variables were analyzed using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Analysis, revealing significant correlations. A mediation model was then established for the analysis Research findings reveal that there is a significant negative relationship between status anxiety and professional motivation, and a positive significant relationship between life satisfaction and professional motivation. As a result of the mediation analysis, it was seen that life satisfaction has a significant mediating role relationship between status anxiety and professional motivation. In order to increase teachers' professional motivation, it is recommended that teachers be supported in reducing their status-related concerns and increasing their life satisfaction.

Keywords: Status anxiety, professional motivation, life satisfaction, teachers.

Introduction

There are many factors that affect the mental health of teachers, one of the basic elements of education. One of these is economic inequality, which is a result of the economic problems the country has experienced in recent years for this study conducted in Türkiye. Melita et al. (2021) state that psychological processes should be taken into account to explain the negative consequences of economic inequality and that one of these processes may be status anxietyStatus is an important concept that reflects an individual's place, social position and success in society. Individuals may show stress reactions when faced with the possibility of losing their status or not reaching the standards of success in their social environment (Casey, 2020). These stress reactions appear in the literature as status anxiety.

Status anxiety refers to individuals' constant anxiety about their social position, success, and social acceptance (Paskov et al., 2013). Status anxiety can lead individuals to behave less socially consciously, push them to be more selfish, and this can cause individuals to behave more discriminatorily towards people with lower social status (Melita et al., 2020). It is thought that this anxiety affects the individual's life and mood as well as social life. Therefore, understanding the source of status anxiety experienced by individuals is important in understanding broader social dynamics.

Status anxiety has a different structure than the anxiety states defined in the literature. Status anxiety differs from general anxiety in that it is more specifically concerned with current social status (Balsamo et al., 2013). Research shows that status anxiety negatively affects the mental health of individuals (Blake & Brooks, 2019; Woody et al., 2018). In addition, status anxiety weakens workplace

relationships, reduces job satisfaction in employees, and reduces organizational performance (Keshabyan & Day, 2020). Based on all this information, it can be said that when individuals experience status anxiety within the organization, it can negatively affect the overall enjoyment of the work done by employees, leading to job dissatisfaction, decreased performance, and therefore decreased motivation.

Another concept related to the quality of education is motivation. Motivation is generally an internal process that directs the individual to behavior (Lussier, 2022) and is defined as the psychological need that activates the internal behavior and motivation of the individual to achieve the goal (Williams & Luthans, 1992). Individuals with high motivation have characteristics such as doing things as well as possible, doing things to achieve success, completing tasks that require effort and skill, wanting to specialize in a certain field, accomplishing difficult tasks with satisfactory results, and engaging in meaningful work (Sudarjat et al., 2015). The concept of professional motivation is a process that directs and empowers the behavior of people working in institutional areas (Leonard et al., 1999). When considered from the perspective of teachers, it can be said that professional motivation is one of the important factors affecting teachers' achievement of their goals and providing a qualified education.

It is very important for teachers to have professional motivation that will enable them to achieve the goals of their school organizations (Güneş & Köse, 2021). The motivation level of teachers is affected by many factors. These factors include personal/social factors, classroom environment, socioeconomic status, student behavior, exam stress, self-confidence/teacher's personality, and rewards/incentives (Alam & Farid, 2011). According to Kocabaş (2009), the perceptions of the teaching profession regarding their status in society are among the factors that motivate teachers. In this context, it can be thought that teachers' concerns about status may also negatively affect their professional motivation.

It is not possible for educational practices to be successful in a place where teacher motivation is low (Yarım & Ada, 2021). Research shows that high teacher motivation is beneficial for both the teacher and the student (Affuso et al., 2022; Hasibuan, 2022; Mašková et al., 2022). Gönülaçar (2016) explains the factors affecting the quality of teachers as the teacher's motivation, job satisfaction, beliefs about the job, confidence in his/her skills, participation in the decision-making process, autonomy, opportunity for promotion at work, workload, reputation of the profession, amount of wages earned, managerial attitudes, feedback on performance, relations with colleagues and working conditions. When these factors are examined, it is important to examine the status concerns and professional motivations of teachers and to suggest the necessary strategies in order to increase both the personal lives of teachers and the quality of education.

The mediating role of life satisfaction

Another concept that is thought to be related to an individual's professional motivation is life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is a cognitive component of subjective well-being and includes cognitive judgments about one's life (Diener, 1984). Life satisfaction is generally defined as the situation or outcome obtained by comparing a person's expectations with what they have (Haybron, 2004). Life satisfaction is not only related to a certain area, but is a positive evaluation of life as a whole and therefore includes the individual's work-related experiences. When considered in the light of these definitions, it is inevitable that the level of satisfaction with life will have certain effects on other areas of life.

Appleton and Song (2008) suggest that life satisfaction has six different components. These components are the person's income level, social and occupational status, opportunities and social mobility, welfare conditions, current state policy and environment, family and social relations. As can be understood from these components, life satisfaction is a concept intertwined with status and professional motivation and has a dynamic structure. In light of all this information, it is believed that life satisfaction can increase teachers' professional motivation and play a mediating role in mitigating the negative impact of status anxiety on professional motivation. Therefore, the concept of life satisfaction was included in the research as a mediating variable.

The first studies that examined the relationship between professional life and life satisfaction were based on the Overflow Approach. Overflow, as a concept, is the transition from one area to another and their interaction and assimilation. The spillover approach states that situations occurring in one living area spread to other living areas (Dolan & Gosselin, 2000). For example, if satisfaction in one area of life is low, this will affect satisfaction in other areas of life in the same direction. In the current study, this approach was used as a basis to examine the antecedents of teachers' professional motivation. Additionally, a mediation model based on the theoretical model was tested in a Turkish teacher sample.

Purpose of the Study

Recent changes in the education system have brought

about challenges to the status and prestige of the teaching profession. This has led to increased status anxiety and decreased motivation among teachers. Therefore, teachers were chosen as the target audience for this study. Status anxiety can reduce teachers' professional motivation. At this point, the present study can contribute to the understanding of the factors that cause teachers' status anxiety and help develop strategies to make teachers' professional motivation and thus education more effective. The findings of this research will be beneficial in improving the quality of education by increasing teachers' motivation and life satisfaction. Furthermore, this study is one of the first to examine the impact of status anxiety on teacher motivation through life satisfaction. In this sense, the current study is important for its contribution to the literature.

Based on the Spill-Over Approach, the current research assumes that life satisfaction may affect individuals' professional lives in the same direction. Based on this idea, the aim of the present study is to investigate the mediating role of life satisfaction in the relationship between teachers' status concerns and professional motivation. Considering these theoretical explanations and research results, the following hypotheses were created:

- H1: There is a negative relationship between status anxiety and life satisfaction.

- H2: There is a positive relationship between life satisfaction and professional motivation.

- H3: There is a negative relationship between status anxiety and professional motivation.

- H4: Life satisfaction has a mediator role between status anxiety and professional motivation.

Method

Research Model
This research was designed in the correlational research design because it examines the relationships between teachers' status concerns, professional motivation, and life satisfaction with simple mediating roles. In correlational studies, the direction and level of relationships between variables are examined (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Population and Sample
The study group consisted of 253 teachers working at various levels of education in public schools in different provinces located in the Central Black Sea region during the 2024-2025 academic year. The study population consisted of teachers in public schools in the Common

Black Sea Region. The teachers in the study group were reached through the convenience sampling method. The purpose of the convenience sampling method is to create a study group that is easy to participate in the research (Christensen et al., 2015).

Table 1.

Demographic Information About the Study Group

Variable		n	%
Gender	Female	165	65.2
	Male	88	34.8
Professional experience	1-5 years	22	8.7
	6-10 years	30	11.9
	11-15 years	74	29.2
	15 years above	127	50.2
Educational level	Kindergarten	27	10.7
	Primary school	80	32
	Secondary school	81	31.6
	High school	65	25.7

When the distribution of teachers by gender variable was examined, it was found that 165 (65.2%) were female, and 88 (34.8%) were male. The distribution of participants in terms of professional experience is as follows; 8.7% have 1-5 years of professional experience, 11.9% have 6-10 years of professional experience, 29.2% have 11-15 years of professional experience, and 50.2% have over 15 years of professional experience. In terms of the education level, it was determined that 10.7% of the participants were in kindergarten, 32% in primary school, 31.6% in secondary school and 25.7% in high school. In addition, participants include teachers from different branches such as preschool, mathematics, foreign language, classroom, special education, guidance, visual arts, informatics, technology design, science, religious culture and moral knowledge.

Data Collection Tools

Status Anxiety Scale
The Status Anxiety Scale, developed by Day and Fiske (2016), was adapted to Turkish by Sürücü et al. (2022). The scale has a one-dimensional structure consisting of five items. Scale items are scored between 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree. As the scores obtained from the scale increase, it is evaluated that the participant's status anxiety is high. As a result of factor analysis, it was determined that the factor loadings of the items in the scale were .81 and above. The reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as .95 by the researchers who adapted the scale. As a result of the

confirmatory factor analysis, the fit indices were found as χ^2= 24.872, df= 11, χ^2/df= 2.261, GFI= 0.984, NFI= 0.972, IFI= 0.984, TLI= 0.959, CFI= 0.984, RMSEA= 0.058. These findings confirm that the Status Anxiety Scale has construct validity. The scale includes items such as "I feel anxious about being stuck in my current position for the rest of my life." and "I sometimes worry about being in a lower social position."

Teacher Professional Motivation Scale

Teacher Professional Motivation Scale was developed by Karabağ Köse et al. (2020) to determine the professional motivation levels of teachers. The scale is answered in a 5-point Likert type, with responses ranging from "1-very negative effects to 5-very positive effects". The scale consists of 25 items and 4 sub-dimensions. These factors are; in-school factors, professional development and prestige, out-of-school factors and physical facilities. The total score to be obtained from the scale varies between 25 and 125. There are no items in the scale that need to be reverse scored. The correlation values of the scale items vary between .32 and .62. As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis conducted within the scope of validity studies, the fit values were calculated as χ^2/sd=2.17; RMSEA=.06; GFI=.86; AGFI=.82; CFI=.90; NFI=.83 for the paper-pencil test and χ^2/sd=4.95; RMSEA=.07; GFI=.88; AGFI=.85; CFI=.93; NFI=.91 for the online application. These values reveal that the four-factor structure of the scale shows acceptable fit. As a result of the reliability study of the scale, Cronbach alpha values were found to be .90 for in-school factors, .81 for out-of-school factors, .76 for professional development and prestige, and .78 for physical facilities. Finally, the scale includes statements such as "The quality of the physical environment in our school" and "The level of appreciation of the work done in our school".

Life Satisfaction Scale

The Life Satisfaction Scale, developed by Diener (1985), was adapted into Turkish by Dağlı and Baysal (2016). The scale has a one-dimensional structure consisting of five items. The reliability of the scale was determined by Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient and test-retest technique. The consistency coefficient for the entire scale was calculated as .88. In order to test the test-retest reliability of the scale, Turkish forms were applied to a group of 47 teachers at two-week intervals and the correlation coefficient between the two applications was determined as .97. As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis conducted within the scope of the validity study, the fit indices were found to be χ^2/sd=1.17; RMSEA=.03; GFI=.99; AGFI=.97; CFI=1.00, NFI=.99 and NNFI=1.00. The

scale includes items such as "I have a life close to my ideals." and "I am satisfied with my life."

Procedure

The study group, which participated in the research on a voluntary basis, was informed about the importance and purpose of the research before moving on to the implementation process. In addition, participants were informed about ethical principles and confidentiality, and the data set created online was sent to married individuals to ensure their participation. Ethical permission for the research was obtained from Amasya University Social Sciences Ethics Committee.

Ethical considerations

Ethics committee approval was obtained from Amasya University Social Sciences Ethics Committee (Date: 12.05.2025, Number: 8979). The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki Principles. Additionally, informed consent has been obtained from the participants.

Data Analysis

Before analyzing the data obtained in the study, the conformity of the data to univariate and multivariate normal distribution was examined with normality analyses. For this purpose, compliance with the univariate normal distribution was evaluated by examining the skewness and kurtosis values. Tabachnick and Fidell (2015) report that the skewness and kurtosis values being between [-1.5, +1.5] is a criterion for the normality of the distribution. After the multivariate normality of the data set was evaluated by examining the Mahalanobis, Tolerance and VIF values, it was decided that the data set also had multivariate normality and the analysis of the data was started. In the analysis of the data obtained in the study, Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was performed to determine the relationships between the variables. In addition, simple mediation analysis was performed using SPSS Model 4.0 (Hayes, 2018) macro to examine the mediating role of life satisfaction in the relationship between status anxiety and professional motivation. The analysis was performed using SPSS version 25 (IBM SPSS Corp., Armonk, NY, USA).

Results

Correlations between variables

Correlations between status anxiety, professional motivation, and life satisfaction are in Table 2:

Table 2.

Correlations Between Status Anxiety, Professional Motivation and Life Satisfaction (n=253)

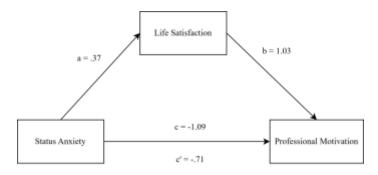| Variable	1	2	3
1.Status anxiety	1		
2.Professional motivation	-.32**	1	
3.Life satisfaction	-.45**	.24**	1
M	14.78	90.64	15.21
SD	4.89	16.56	4.03

*p < .05, ** p < .01

In Table 2, Pearson product moment correlation analysis indicate a significant negative relationship between status anxiety and professional motivation (r = -.32) and life satisfaction (r = -.45). There is also a positive correlation between the total score of professional motivation and life satisfaction (r = .24). The correlation analysis results show that as teachers' status anxiety increases, their professional motivation and life satisfaction decrease negatively; and as teachers' life satisfaction increases, their professional motivation also increases. Additionally, the relationship between status anxiety and the sub-dimensions of the professional motivation scale was examined, but the findings were not included in the table. As a result of the analysis, the sub-dimension of status anxiety and the total score of professional motivation scale shows a significant negative relationship between physical facilities (r = -.16), in-school factors (r = -.24), out-of-school factors (r = -.39), professional development and prestige (r = -.32).

Simple mediation analysis

The model aiming to test the mediating role of life satisfaction in the relationship between teachers' status concerns and professional motivation is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

Representation of the Mediation Model

In this part of the research, the mediating role of life satisfaction in the effect of status anxiety on teacher professional motivation was analyzed with the PROCESS v3.5 plugin added to the SPSS interface and developed by Andrew F. Hayes. The regression analysis results for the mediation test are shown in Table 3:

Table 3.

Simple Mediation Analysis Results

					95% CI	
	B	SH	*t*	*p*	BLLCI	BULCI
PM (R² = .15) Model Components						
SA→ LS	-.37	.05	-7.87	.001*	-.46	-.28
LS→PM	1.03	.27	3.85	.001*	.50	1.56
Direct Effect						
SA→ PM	-.71	.22	-3.22	.001*	-1.14	-.27
Indirect Effect						
SA→LS→ PM	-.38	.11			-.62	-.17
Total Impact						
SA→ PM	-1.09	.20	-5.36	.001*	-1.49	-.69

Abbreviations: PM: Professional motivation, SA: Status anxiety, LS: Life satisfaction

***p < .001.

As seen in Table 3, as a result of the mediation analyses, it was found that the total effect of status anxiety on professional motivation was statistically significant (B = -.1.09, SH = .20, p < .001). The direct effect of status anxiety on professional motivation is also statistically significant when teachers' life satisfaction is controlled (B = -.71, SH = .22, p < .001). Finally, the indirect effect of status anxiety on occupational motivation through life satisfaction is statistically significant as the 95% confidence interval does not include zero (B = -.38, SH = .11). Life satisfaction explains approximately 35% of the total effect of status anxiety on vocational motivation. In addition, the mediation regression model created has a medium effect size, explaining approximately 15% of the variation in marital conflict scores (F (2, 250) = 22.54, ΔR² = .15, p < .001). As a result, the mediation analysis shows that life satisfaction has a mediating role in the relationship between status anxiety and occupational motivation. In other words, life satisfaction has a protective role in the relationship between status anxiety and occupational motivation. The negative effect of status anxiety on professional motivation among teachers is reduced by life satisfaction.

Discussion

This study aimed to determine the mediating role of life satisfaction in the relationship between teachers' status concerns and professional motivation. Analysis was

carried out in line with the first hypothesis of the research and a negative relationship was obtained between status anxiety and life satisfaction. This result means that as teachers' status anxiety increases, their life satisfaction decreases. When the literature was examined, it was seen that the result of the current research was parallel to the results of similar studies in the literature (Çetinceli & Tüzün, 2022; Delhey & Dragolov, 2014; Turaç & Donar, 2017). In the status anxiety scale development study by Sürücü et al. (2022), the relationship between them and life satisfaction was examined in order to test the criterion validity. As a result of the research, a negative correlation was found between status anxiety and life satisfaction. Blake and Brooks (2019) state that status anxiety is one of the factors that negatively affects the mental health of individuals. In this context, considering that life satisfaction, which is an individual's cognitive evaluation of himself/herself in his/her life, is closely related to positive emotions, it is an expected result that status anxiety will negatively affect satisfaction with life.

The second hypothesis of the study is that there is a positive relationship between life satisfaction and professional motivation. Analysis was conducted in line with this hypothesis, and a positive relationship was found between life satisfaction and professional motivation. In other words, as teachers' life satisfaction increases, their professional motivation increases. This result is consistent with studies in the literature showing that life satisfaction has a positive and significant relationship with motivation (Tulunay Ateş & İhtiyaroğlu, 2021; Yalçınsoy, 2017) and academic motivation (Koç, 2018). Chacko (1983) emphasizes that work life and general life are closely related to each other and that positive experiences in work life will increase the life satisfaction of individuals. Therefore, a positive relationship between professional motivation and life satisfaction is an expected result.

In line with the third hypothesis of the research, it was analyzed whether there was a relationship between status anxiety and professional motivation. The analysis results revealed that there was a negative significant relationship between teachers' status anxiety and their professional motivation, consistent with the research hypothesis. In addition, as a result of the analyses, a negative significant relationship was obtained between status anxiety and the sub-dimensions of the occupational motivation scale, physical facilities, in-school factors, out-of-school factors, occupational development and prestige. This result means that as teachers' status anxiety increases, their professional motivation decreases. Factors that increase status anxiety, such as inadequate promotions, the possibility of demotion, or insecure employment, are also

considered to be factors that reduce employees' commitment to their organizations (Kalleberg, 2018). Higher status anxiety is linked to lower work motivation, which may affect individuals' occupational choices and mental health. As a result of the research conducted by As a result of the research conducted by Şahbudak and Karahan (2024), it was seen that teachers' perception of their professional status was low and this situation negatively affected their professional satisfaction and motivation. The research results by Keshabyan and Day (2020) showed that high status anxiety significantly predicts low job satisfaction. The study found that as status anxiety increases, job satisfaction and general well-being decrease. The results of the research conducted by Altaş (2024) show that as teachers' status concerns increase, their quality of work life decreases. In this context, it can be said that an increase in individuals' status anxiety will negatively affect the general enjoyment of their work, leading to job dissatisfaction and decreased performance.

In line with the last hypothesis of the study, the mediating role of life satisfaction in the relationship between status anxiety and professional motivation was analyzed. The research result revealed that life satisfaction plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between status anxiety and occupational motivation. This result means that as teachers' life satisfaction increases, the negative effect of status anxiety on professional motivation decreases. As explained above, individuals' status anxiety has a negative effect on their professional motivation. On the other hand, according to Keser (2005), it is a generally accepted idea that there is a relationship between satisfaction in work life and life satisfaction. Individuals' satisfaction with the institution they work for, the pleasure and satisfaction they get from working, and life satisfaction affect each other (Aykaç, 2019). As a result of the research conducted by Gözen (2022), it was observed that as teachers' family life satisfaction increases, their teacher motivation, professional satisfaction and personal development, motivation for the learning process and students increase. Based on this, it can be said that life satisfaction increases the professional motivation of individuals. On the other hand, a study by Çivilidağ et al. (2018) found a moderately significant negative relationship between life satisfaction scores and trait anxiety scores. In a similar study conducted by Güngör (2011), the relationship between anxiety and life satisfaction was examined, and a negative and statistically significant relationship was found between trait anxiety and life satisfaction variables. In this context, as teachers' life satisfaction increases, the decrease in the negative impact of status anxiety on their professional motivation is an expected result.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, the mediating role of life satisfaction in the relationship between teachers' status concerns and professional motivation was examined. As a result of the research, negative significant relationships were found between status anxiety and both the total score of professional motivation and all sub-dimensions of the professional motivation scale. However, it was observed that there was a negative and significant correlation between status anxiety and life satisfaction. Finally, the mediating role of life satisfaction was determined to be statistically significant in the relationship between status anxiety and occupational motivation.

Based on the current research, some suggestions for future research are made. Firstly, the results obtained in this study were limited to 253 participants determined by convenience sampling. 88 of these participants were male. These are the limitations of the study. It is thought that it would be beneficial to conduct future research on this subject with a more comprehensive sample by increasing the number of male participants. Teachers were already included in this study. No analysis was made according to the institutions where teachers work. However, conditions may differ in public and private schools. Therefore, in future studies, status anxiety, professional motivation and life satisfaction of teachers can be examined according to the type of school they work in. In addition, based on current research results, it is known that status anxiety negatively affects professional motivation and life satisfaction. Therefore, by focusing on teachers' status concerns, it may be possible for educational institutions to develop supportive policies and programs in this regard, thus increasing both teachers' motivation and life satisfaction.

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