



# Adaptive and maladaptive work-related motivation among teachers: A person-centered examination and links with well-being



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## HIGHLIGHTS

- We identified motivational profiles among teachers using latent profile analysis.
- Adaptive and maladaptive motivation factors were examined.
- Results revealed five distinct profiles of teachers' motivation.
- Profiles differed on the adaptive and maladaptive motivation combinations.
- In addition, profiles differed on well-being outcomes and teachers' characteristics.

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## ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this study was to identify profiles of motivation among teachers. Using latent profile analysis among  $n = 519$  Australian teachers, we considered multidimensional motivation by examining adaptive (self-efficacy, valuing, mastery orientation) and maladaptive motivation (anxiety, uncertain control, performance avoidance). Results revealed five distinct profiles of teachers' motivation. The study's secondary aim involved determining how the profiles are associated with well-being outcomes (work enjoyment, workplace buoyancy, work disengagement) and teachers' personal and job characteristics. Results revealed significant differences across the profiles. Together, the findings underscore the importance of attending to teachers' motivation in both research and practice.

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## 1. Introduction

Motivation drives teachers' actions in the classroom and underpins the quality of their work (Pelletier & Rocchi, 2016, pp. 107–127; Richardson & Watt, 2010). Developing knowledge of teachers' motivation has been identified as a critical research need and several calls have been made for extending this relatively nascent research area (e.g., Richardson & Watt, 2010; Roth, 2014; Urdan, 2014). One largely unexamined issue concerns profiles of motivation among teachers. Examinations using person-centered approaches identify profiles or groups of teachers (e.g., cluster analysis, latent profile analysis). Researchers have begun to examine motivational profiles among teachers providing evidence

that motivational constructs such as autonomous and controlled motivation align in different ways for distinct subgroups of teachers (e.g., Van den Berghe et al., 2013, 2014). However, the extent to which motivational profiles can be determined from other motivational constructs remains unknown. This is particularly important given the multidimensional nature of motivation (Urdan, 2014) and given that several motivational constructs identified as influential in teachers' work (e.g., self-efficacy, mastery orientation) have yet to be investigated.

Thus, the purpose of the current study is to advance knowledge with respect to teachers' motivation by applying latent profiles analysis and by examining novel motivational constructs. We harnessed the quadripartite model of need achievement (Covington & Roberts, 1994; see also Martin & Marsh, 2003; Martin, Marsh, & Debus, 2001) to guide the study and examined several adaptive and maladaptive motivation factors salient in teachers' work that are informed by the quadripartite model. As discussed more fully

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below, the adaptive motivation factors were self-efficacy for teaching, valuing of teaching work, and mastery orientation towards teaching. The maladaptive motivation factors were anxiety, uncertain control, and performance avoidance, all with respect to teaching work. Focusing on these six motivational factors, the primary aim of the current study was to identify different motivational profiles among a diverse sample of teachers. Our secondary aim was to examine the extent to which the profiles are associated with three salient work-related well-being outcomes (work enjoyment, buoyancy, and disengagement), as well as teachers' personal and job characteristics (gender, age, teaching experience, school level). Together, these two aims are important for understanding the different motivational profiles of teachers that exist within the profession, and uncovering whether profile membership is differentially associated with other salient variables.

### 1.1. Multidimensional motivation for teaching

Motivation tends to be considered a multidimensional construct (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2012; Martin, 2007) and motivation among teachers is no exception (Urduan, 2014). Given the breadth of conceptual and empirical work in the area of motivation, there have been calls for integrated frameworks that bring together key ideas about motivation (e.g., Pintrich, 2003; Reeve, 2016). The Motivation and Engagement Wheel (Martin, 2007) was designed with this in mind. It draws together understanding from diverse motivational theories to provide a use-inspired, multidimensional approach to motivation (Martin, 2007). Although the bulk of research harnessing the Wheel has focused on students and their academic motivation, the Wheel has also shown to be appropriate for investigating motivation among teachers (Martin, 2009).

In the Wheel, motivation comprises three adaptive factors and three maladaptive factors. The adaptive factors are self-efficacy, valuing, and mastery orientation. As relevant to teaching, *self-efficacy* refers to teachers' judgements of their ability to do well in their work, *valuing* refers to teachers' perceptions of the importance, usefulness, and relevance of their work, and *mastery orientation* in teaching involves teachers' goal orientation towards developing competence and knowledge in teaching skills (Martin, 2009). The maladaptive factors are anxiety, uncertain control, and performance avoidance. As relevant to teaching, *anxiety* refers to feelings of tension or worry that occur when teachers think about or do their work, *uncertain control* refers to teachers' uncertainty about how to control or achieve particular outcomes at work, and *performance avoidance* (also known as failure avoidance) refers to teachers' desire to avoid doing poorly or disappointing others at work (Martin, 2009).

Although researchers are increasingly attending to teachers' self-efficacy, valuing, and mastery orientation (e.g., Butler, 2007; Klassen & Chiu, 2010), less attention has been focused on understanding maladaptive factors such as anxiety, uncertain control, and performance avoidance. Moreover, although many dimensions of teachers' motivation have been examined from variable-centered perspectives (e.g., investigating associations among constructs), only limited work has examined adaptive and maladaptive dimensions with a view to identifying salient and distinct teacher motivational profiles. The current study provided an opportunity to extend understanding in these areas.

### 1.2. Teachers' motivation: variable-centered and person-centered approaches

The bulk of research on teachers' motivation has involved variable-centered examinations. With analytic methods such as structural equation modeling, variable-centered approaches focus

on interrelationships among variables and tend to assume that all individuals in the sample are from the same population (Marsh, Lüdtke, Trautwein, & Morin, 2009). Thus, variable-centered approaches provide knowledge of associations among variables at a sample-wide level (Morin, Morizot, Boudrias, & Madore, 2011). In the teacher literature, researchers from many different countries have conducted variable-centered examinations and have revealed the importance of teachers' motivation. For example, among Australian, Canadian, German, Israeli, and Norwegian teachers, researchers have examined adaptive forms of motivation such as self-efficacy for teaching, valuing of work, autonomous (i.e., self-determined) motivation, and mastery goal orientation (e.g., Butler, 2007; Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012; Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007; Watt & Richardson, 2008). At the same time, maladaptive forms of motivation have also been examined, such as controlled motivation for teaching (motivation based on external pressures) and avoidance goal approaches for teaching (e.g., Butler, 2007; Collie, Shapka, Perry, & Martin, 2016; Roth et al., 2007). Key findings from this prior research show that adaptive motivation tends to be associated with positive outcomes such as teachers' well-being and students' motivation, whereas the opposite is often true for maladaptive motivation (e.g., Butler, 2016, 2007; Collie et al., 2012; Holzberger, Philipp, & Kunter, 2014; Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Roth et al., 2007).

In contrast to variable-centered approaches, person-centered approaches use methods such as latent profile analysis and aim to identify homogeneous subgroups within the population (Bauer & Curran, 2004). In the literature, researchers in Australia, Belgium, Canada, and Germany have begun to conduct person-centered examinations among teachers. Some work has identified profiles based on teachers' experiences of motivation, well-being, and/or contextual constructs (e.g., Collie, Shapka, Perry, & Martin, 2015; Klusmann, Kunter, Trautwein, Lüdtke, & Baumert, 2008). Other work has looked at teachers' motivations for entering the profession (Watt & Richardson, 2008). Of note, two relevant studies have focused directly on teachers' motivational profiles regarding their work as teachers. Van den Berghe et al. (2013, 2014) employed cluster analysis and identified four teacher profiles that had varying levels of autonomous and controlled motivation—thus, providing evidence that multiple constructs can be examined to identify motivational profiles.

Taken together, there is a growing interest in person-centered methods for understanding teachers' experiences. However, research looking specifically at motivational constructs remains limited and has only considered two types of motivation (autonomous and controlled motivation). The extent to which other motivation constructs that have been demonstrated as salient in teachers' work may align among different subgroups of teachers remains unknown. A core aim of the current study, therefore, was to extend knowledge of teachers' motivational profiles by examining six novel constructs in a person-centered approach. Moreover, given that much of the prior person-centered research has involved cluster analysis, there is a need for latent approaches that control for measurement error, allow for models to be specified with more flexibility (e.g., the ability to free variances across profiles), and enable the inclusion of covariates and outcomes in the latent modeling (Marsh et al., 2009; Peugh & Fan, 2013). Thus, in the current study, we endeavored to extend knowledge of teachers' motivational profiles by employing latent profile analysis.

### 1.3. Quadripolar model of need achievement

The conceptual framework applied in the current study is Covington's (1992; Covington & Omelich, 1985) quadripolar model of need achievement. This model is based on the idea that the

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