



Harmonious passion and its relationship with teacher well-being



Angelica Moè

Department of General Psychology, University of Padua, Via Venezia, 8, Padua, Italy

HIGHLIGHTS

- Measured harmonious (HP) and obsessive (OP) passion in teachers.
- HP but not OP related with well-being dimensions.
- HP is affected by job satisfaction, positive affect, and self-efficacy.
- Primary school teachers are more passionate.

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the relationships between passion for teaching and teachers' well-being distinguishing between Harmonious Passion (HP), characterized by free acceptance of the activity in one's identity, and Obsessive Passion (OP), moved by perceived obligation. 379 primary, middle, and high school teachers participated. They filled in questionnaires to assess HP, OP, job satisfaction, teaching praxes, positive and negative affect, subjective happiness, and self-efficacy twice at a 3-months interval. HP related to all the adaptive aspects measured. HP at Time 2 was affected by job satisfaction, positive affect, and self-efficacy at Time 1. Suggestions for improving teachers' well-being are provided.

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1. Introduction

There is a growing interest in teachers well-being and its correlates. Well-being has been found to relate with engagement (e.g., Parker, Martin, Colmar, & Liem, 2012), and extra work (Kurland & Hasson-Gilad, 2015), to reduce burn-out (e.g., Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010), and to foster teachers' emotion regulation (e.g., Cheung & Lun, 2015; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015) with positive effects for both teachers and their students (Tennant et al., 2015). Whereas some contextual variables can play a role (e.g., Mansfield, Beltman, Price, & McConney, 2012), the results from large scale investigations such as the Teaching and Learning International Survey (OECD, 2014) suggest that mainly psychological individual factors matter.

Among them, recently, Renshaw, Long, and Cook (2015) stressed the importance of positive indicators of teachers well-being focused on happiness, growth, and health, following a positive

psychology perspective (Diener, 2000). The most studied are job satisfaction (e.g., Mattern & Bauer, 2014; Yildirim, 2015), and those proposed by the van Horn, Taris, Schaufeli, and Schreurs (2004) occupational well-being theory: affective, professional, social, cognitive and psychosomatic dimensions such as positive affect, and self-efficacy. In addition some studies (e.g., Chan, 2009, 2013; Forest et al., 2012) found that also some emotional and cognitive strengths such as hope, zest, gratitude, and forgiveness relate with dimensions of subjective well-being.

This research will consider an underexplored factor: passion for teaching either harmonious or obsessive, following the model proposed by Vallerand et al. (2003), below described. The rationale behind is that – being harmonious passion a motivational strength linked with many positive aspects – it will empower teachers and foster their well-being. These relationships will be examined in this study by considering a range of aspects, beyond job satisfaction, namely positive and negative affect, teaching praxes, subjective happiness, and self-efficacy, and assessing them twice, at a 3-months interval, so that to ascertain which factors most affect

E-mail address: angelica.moe@unipd.it.

teachers passion. A further aim will be to test differences in passion due to type of school, age and years of teaching, which have never been explored before.

1.1. *The Dualistic Model of Passion*

Passion has been defined as a strong inclination toward a self-defining activity (or object) that one likes (or even loves), finds important, and in which he/she devotes time and energy on a regular basis (Vallerand et al., 2003). Passion make people engaged and involved, and favor enduring effects causing positive or negative outcomes depending on the kind of passion, as depicted by the Dualistic Model of Passion (DMP) which distinguishes between Harmonious Passion (HP) and Obsessive Passion (OP) (Vallerand et al., 2003). HP derives from an autonomous internalization of a loved activity into a person's identity. The passionate activity is freely chosen, interacts harmoniously with various aspects of life, is perceived under the control of the person, who experience positive affect when engaging in it. OP is a strong inclination towards an activity that has been internalized into a person's identity in a controlled way. It is characterized by feelings of being obliged to carry out a certain task, being moved by the urge to be accepted or positively judged, a desire to demonstrate ability, increase self-esteem (e.g., Crocker & Park, 2004), avoid guilt and enhance self-worth, or by the sense of excitement deriving from performing the activity.

OP tends to narrow cognition and motivation and to favor the occurrence of maladaptive outcomes such as negative affect, rigid persistence, too much work, family or work-related conflicts due to the difficulty in stopping from engaging in the passionate activity (for a review see Vallerand, 2008). On the opposite, HP tends to expand the cognitive processes and motivational resources, and leads to an adaptive pattern of results, such as higher work satisfaction, and reduced risk of burnout (Vallerand, Paquet, Philippe, & Charest, 2010), academic engagement (Stoerber, Childs, Hayward, & Feast, 2011), increased positive affect and decreased negative affect (Mageau & Vallerand, 2007), and higher use of signature strengths (Forest et al., 2012).

1.2. *Harmonious passion and well-being*

The DMP has been studied with a range of populations and life situations, such as sports (e.g., Vallerand et al., 2008), pathological gambling (Philippe & Vallerand, 2007), and successful aging (e.g., Rousseau & Vallerand, 2008), demonstrating that HP but not OP or lack of passion favors well-being, positive affect, and subjective vitality in both genders and various age groups (Philippe, Vallerand, & Lavigne, 2009).

While engaging in the passionate activity and after having engaged in an activity out of HP people experience positive affect, life satisfaction, subjective vitality, and reduced depression and anxiety. On the opposite, OP leads to distress, which means lack of relationships with positive indexes and positive relations with depression and anxiety (Philippe, Vallerand, Houffort, Lavigne, & Donahue, 2010; Philippe et al., 2009; Rousseau & Vallerand, 2008). In addition, HP has been shown to be linked with experience of flow during the activity, while OP is related with rumination while engaging in a different activity, which prevents the flow experience to occur thus affecting negatively well-being (Carpentier, Mageau, & Vallerand, 2012). Moreover, OP leads to an internal pressure to perform the activity and to rigid persistence which further prevent to experience well-being (Vallerand et al., 2003). This study aimed at testing the hypothesis that HP will relate with various facets of well-being in teachers, while OP will not or will relate negatively.

1.3. *Passion for teaching*

Passion has been considered “essential to all good teaching” (Day, 2004, p. 11), because it is a motivational force which could favor teachers well-being and which affect students motivation (Patrick, Hisley, Kempler, & College, 2000), enjoyment (Frenzel, Goetz, Lüdtke, Pekrun, & Sutton 2009), and achievement (Moè, 2016). Nevertheless, little research has been devoted to consider passion for teaching (Carbonneau, Vallerand, Fernet, & Guay, 2008; Fernet, Lavigne, Vallerand, & Austin, 2014; Lavigne, Forest, Fernet, & Crevier-Braud, 2014; Trépanier, Fernet, Austin, Forest, & Vallerand, 2013). Carbonneau et al. (2008) examined job satisfaction, positive student behavior, and burn-out in primary, high school and adult education teachers. Both kinds of passion were found to relate to positive student behavior, but only HP related positively with job satisfaction and negatively with burn-out. Trépanier et al. (2013) found that in both teachers and nurses HP partially mediated the relationships between job demand/resources and burnout/work engagement. Lavigne et al. (2014) found that HP led to positive evaluations of job support, and control, while OP led to perception of work overload in primary, high school and adult education teachers. Fernet et al. (2014) outlined the importance of job autonomy in predicting HP and OP (negatively), which in turn affected burnout. All these studies focused mainly on job related factors: job satisfaction, job resources, job support, and job autonomy showing that HP is a protective factor, because it enhances well-being and reduces work related stress and burn-out (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009). However, relationships with other aspects linked with teachers well-being and teaching deserve to be studied.

The first aspect is affect – either positive (e.g., interest, excitement) or negative (e.g. anger, sadness) – which has a central role in shaping teachers adjustment to school challenges (Hargreaves, 1998), and which is a core component of hedonic well-being (Diener, 2000). The second aspect is the teachers' self-reported use of praxes related to teaching and motivating students such as 'Review topics to be covered in the following oral tests or written essays with the students', and 'Encourage students who fail'. Moè, Pazzaglia and Ronconi (2010) have demonstrated positive relationships between this variable and some well-being indicators: positive affect, job satisfaction, and self-efficacy. The third aspect is subjective happiness – self-rated in comparison with other people – which is a central aspect of well-being (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005). The fourth aspect is teachers' self-efficacy defined as situation-specific confidence in being able to teach, manage the classroom, support students needs, and help them to learn, achieve, and motivate (Bandura, 1997), which is one of the major sources of motivation and commitment in all aspects of teaching (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998).

To the best of our knowledge, until now, the relationships between teachers' passion and self-efficacy, subjective happiness, positive and negative affect, and teacher praxes have never been assessed. Harmonious passion is an energizing factor which should be linked with well-being (positive affect, reduced negative affect, and subjective happiness), and teachers' adoption of a wide variety of teaching praxes and self-efficacy in face of challenges. So it is predicted that HP, but not OP will relate with all the positive aspects considered, while negative relations are expected with negative affect, which should relate with OP, a result found mainly in the sport realm. Then it is predicted, considering HP and OP measured 3-months later, that job satisfaction, positive affect, self-efficacy, subjective happiness, and teaching praxes are all factors which affect HP, but not OP. Finally differences among primary, middle, and high school teachers will be examined. Given that this is the first time that the relationships between passion and a large number of facets of well-being are examined in teachers a

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