



Within-person profiles of teachers' motivation to teach: Associations with need satisfaction at work, need-supportive teaching, and burnout



Lynn Van den Berghe^{a,*}, Bart Soenens^{b,1}, Nathalie Aelterman^{a,b,2}, Greet Cardon^{a,3}, Isabel B. Tallir^a, Leen Haerens^{a,4}

^a Ghent University, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Department of Movement and Sports Sciences, Watersportlaan 2, B-9000 Gent, Belgium

^b Ghent University, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Department of Developmental, Personality and Social Psychology, Henri Dunantlaan 2, B-9000 Gent, Belgium

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: According to self-determination theory, teachers can engage in their job for a variety of reasons. Motivation can be controlled (feeling externally or internally pressured) or autonomous in nature (enjoying teaching or valuing its importance). The aim of this study was to identify motivational profiles (i.e., within-teacher combinations of autonomous and controlled motivation) and to examine associations between these motivational profiles and the following variables: experiences of need satisfaction, dimensions of teaching style, and burnout.

Design: This study has a cross-sectional design based on teacher reports.

Methods: A total of 201 PE teachers signed in for an online questionnaire on motivation to teach, need satisfaction at work, need-supportive teaching and burnout.

Results: Four hypothesized motivational profiles were retained: a poor quality, a low quantity, a high quantity, and a good quality group. The good quality group displayed the most optimal pattern of antecedents and outcomes, closely followed by the high quantity group. The poor quality group displayed the most maladaptive pattern of associations with antecedents and outcomes, even in comparison to the low quantity group.

Conclusions: Endorsing a specific motivational profile has implications for teachers' need satisfaction and burnout, but also for students, because the quality of teachers' motivation also shows in provided need support toward the students. This finding might convince school policy members and other stakeholders to value the importance of nurturing teachers' autonomous motivation.

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Introduction

"I really enjoy my job as a physical education teacher, it makes me happy to see my students making progress, learning, and enjoying the lessons. That's what drives me as a teacher."

Peter, 35

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +32 (0)9 264 86 33; fax: +32 (0)9 264 64 84.

E-mail addresses: L.VandenBerghe@UGent.be (L. Van den Berghe), Bart.Soenens@UGent.be (B. Soenens), Nathalie.Aelterman@UGent.be (N. Aelterman), Greet.Cardon@UGent.be (G. Cardon), Isabel.Tallir@UGent.be (I.B. Tallir), Leen.Haerens@UGent.be (L. Haerens).

¹ Tel.: +32 (0)9 264 91 34.

² Tel.: +32 (0)9 264 86 33.

³ Tel.: +32 (0)9 264 91 42.

⁴ Tel.: +32 (0)9 264 86 37.

Ideally, physical education (PE) teachers engage in their job because they find teaching enjoyable. However, other reasons can underlie teachers' functioning as well. Teachers can engage in teaching because they see the value of learning new skills to students, because they want to prove to themselves that they are good teachers, or because they feel pressured by others to perform well as a teacher. According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2002), these various reasons or motivational regulations have a differential impact on teachers' functioning (i.e., behavior and emotions). Teachers' functioning is not only of importance for the teachers themselves, but also for students because it is hypothesized that teachers' functioning is related to their teaching practices in the classroom. Most research to date on teacher motivation has taken a variable-centered approach,

examining associations between the separate motivational orientations and teachers' functioning. Because teachers can have multiple reasons for engaging in the job, in the current study we adopted a person-centered approach, examining within-teacher combinations (i.e., profiles) of different motives. This approach allows for an examination of the interplay between different motives in relation to important features of teachers' personal functioning and interpersonal style. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating how PE teachers' motivational profiles relate to teachers' personal need satisfaction, need-supportive teaching behavior toward students, and burnout.

Teacher's motivation from a self-determination theory perspective

According to SDT, motivation to engage in specific behaviors can be situated on a continuum ranging from controlled to autonomous motivation, with autonomous motivation reflecting higher quality of motivation than controlled motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In contrast to theories examining motivation from a quantitative point of view and defining more motivation as 'better' (for example self-efficacy theory, Bandura, 1977), SDT identifies autonomous and controlled motivation as qualitatively different orientations, with autonomous motivation being more adaptive than controlled motivation.

Controlled motivation refers to feeling pressured or coerced to engage in specific behavior or activities. This pressure can arise from external sources, such as a desire to obtain rewards or to avoid disapproval and criticism. With 'external regulation' a teacher would for instance dutifully prepare lessons because of a school inspection. Pressure can also originate from internal sources such as a desire to increase one's self-worth or a desire to avoid feelings of shame or guilt. With 'introjected regulation' a teacher might for instance want to prove herself and show off her skills as a good teacher.

Autonomous motivation involves a sense of volition and self-endorsement. It can arise from the identification with the values and importance of a behavior. With 'identified regulation' a teacher might deeply value the importance of transferring certain skills to students. Autonomous motivation might also arise from the pleasure or inherent satisfaction coming from engaging in the teaching activity itself. With 'intrinsic motivation' a teacher may enjoy enriching students with new insights and knowledge.

In most studies on antecedents and outcomes of teachers' quality of motivation to teach, a variable-centered approach has been taken. In these studies, autonomous motivation related to more optimal outcomes, such as more commitment and engagement in the work setting (Gagné & Deci, 2005), while controlled motivation related to more negative outcomes, such as burnout (Eyal & Roth, 2011; Fernet, Sen, Guay, Marsh, & Dowson, 2008).

Based on these previous studies (Eyal & Roth, 2011; Fernet et al., 2008; Gagné & Deci, 2005), it was expected in the present study that autonomous motivation would primarily relate positively to need satisfaction and need-supportive teaching behavior, while controlled motivation would more closely and positively relate to the more maladaptive outcome burnout.

The value of a person-centered approach

Although the variable-centered approach has yielded important insights in the role of quality of motivation in teachers' functioning, it has typically studied autonomous and controlled motivation as separate dimensions without focusing on their dynamic interplay. This is unfortunate because in reality, teachers can combine several reasons for engaging in their job. Some teachers can enjoy interacting with their students and value the learning outcomes, while

at the same time feeling pressured to attain the goals set for their course because they want to prove themselves or because they want to avoid getting reprimanded. Other teachers might have a more pure autonomous motivational profile, engaging in teaching mainly for volitional reasons without feeling pressured. The advantage of a person-centered approach with cluster analyses lies in the possibility to identify naturally occurring combinations of teachers' reasons to teach. These within-teacher combinations constitute different motivational profiles. Also, by examining whether these profiles differ in terms of antecedents and outcomes of teacher motivation, this approach allows researchers to address important questions about the combined role of types of motivation. One important question, for instance, is whether a profile characterized by high quantity of motivation (i.e., a combination of autonomous and controlled motivation) yields benefits relative to a profile characterized by high quality of motivation (i.e., a profile characterized by autonomous motivation only).

As SDT, in contrast to more quantitative theories of motivation, underscores the importance of qualitative differences in motivation, it would be considered more adaptive to predominantly endorse autonomous reason to teach, than to display high levels of both autonomous and controlled motivation. Similarly, SDT's qualitative view on motivation suggests that it would be better to endorse low autonomous and controlled motivation than to predominantly endorse controlled motivation to teach. As such, a person-centered approach allows for investigating the importance of a qualitative perspective on motivation.

Person-centered analyses (e.g., cluster analyses) have been performed in different contexts, including employees' motivation to work (Van den Broeck, Lens, De Witte, & Van Coillie, 2013), athletes' motivation (Gillet, Berjot, Vallerand, Amoura, & Rosnet, 2012; Gillet, Vallerand, & Paty, 2013), and students' motivation in general education (Hayenga & Corpus, 2010; Ratelle, Guay, Vallerand, Larose, & Sénécal, 2007; Vansteenkiste, Sierens, Soenens, Luyckx, & Lens, 2009). There were also studies specifically investigating motivational profiles in the context of physical education, focusing both on students' motivation (Boiché, Sarrazin, Grouzet, Pelletier, & Chanal, 2008; Haerens, Kirk, Cardon, De Bourdeaudhuij, & Vansteenkiste, 2010; Ntoumanis, 2002) and on teachers' motivation (Van den Berghe, Cardon, et al., 2013).

Most of the studies identifying motivational profiles have taken one of the following approaches. Whereas in some studies motivational profiles were identified on the basis of the four separate motivational regulations of SDT's continuum (i.e., intrinsic motivation, identified regulation, introjected regulation, and external regulation) (Boiché et al., 2008; Gillet et al., 2012, 2013; Ntoumanis, 2002), another strategy (Hayenga & Corpus, 2010) made use of the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to identify clusters. Other studies have identified profiles on the basis of composite scores for autonomous and controlled motivation (Van den Berghe, Cardon, et al., 2013; Van den Broeck et al., 2013; Vansteenkiste et al., 2009). In addition to autonomous and controlled motivation, some studies also included a measure of amotivation in the analyses (Haerens et al., 2010; Ratelle et al., 2007).

Throughout the aforementioned studies (Boiché et al., 2008; Gillet et al., 2012, 2013; Haerens et al., 2010; Hayenga & Corpus, 2010; Ntoumanis, 2002; Ratelle et al., 2007; Van den Berghe, Cardon, et al., 2013; Van den Broeck et al., 2013; Vansteenkiste et al., 2009), six motivational profiles were identified, depending on the variation in the quantity of autonomous motivation (or intrinsic motivation and identified regulation), controlled motivation (or external and introjected regulation), and amotivation. A first motivational profile, identified in all of the studies (except for the study of Gillet et al., 2012), was generally referred to as the

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