Teachers’ Well-Being and the Quality of Instruction: The Important Role of Self-Regulatory Patterns

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Theoretical Background

Teachers’ occupational well-being and quality of instruction are two key aspects of research on teaching that have rarely been studied together. The present study investigates the role of occupational engagement and resilience as two important work-related self-regulatory dimensions that predict well-being and quality of instruction. Based on Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), we assume that the \textit{optimal balance} between work \textit{engagement}, which can be seen as the investment of resources, and resilience, which can be seen as the conservation of resources, is the most adaptive self-regulatory style in the work context. Thus, we hypothesize that self-regulatory patterns are related to teachers’ well-being and performance outcomes (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001; Schaarschmidt & Fischer, 1996). Recent research has suggested \textit{four interpersonal patterns} of work engagement and resilience:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Unambitious type (U)
  \item Healthy-ambitious type (H)
  \item Resigned type (R)
  \item Excessively ambitious type (A)
\end{itemize}

\section*{Research Questions}

1. Can we empirically identify these four self-regulatory patterns in a sample of teachers?

2. Do teachers of the four self-regulatory types differ in terms of their occupational well-being?

3. Do teachers of the four self-regulatory types differ in terms of their instructional performance and their students’ motivation?

\section*{Method}

\subsection*{Sample:}
Research questions 1 & 2: \(N = 1,789\) secondary mathematics teachers (47\% male; \(M = 47.3, SD = 9.4\)) from 197 schools of all academic tracks. Research question 3: subsample of \(n = 315\) secondary mathematics teachers (56\% male; \(M = 47.7, SD = 9.8\)) and their 9th grade classes.

\subsection*{Measures:}
Self-regulatory patterns. Assessed using four engagement and four resilience subscales (Schaarschmidt & Fischer, 1996):
- Engagement: Significance of work (sample item: “Work is my main focus in life”), Career ambition (“I have high aspirations for my future career”), Perfectionism (“I always want my work to be faultless”), Exertion (“I spare no effort at work”) (\(\alpha = .79 - .82\)).
- Resilience: Emotional distancing (“I can switch off easily after work”), Low tendency to give up (“I am easily discouraged by setbacks at work,” recoded), Active coping (“A failure can confuse me with new energy”), Mental stability (“I can remain calm and composed in almost any situation”) (\(\alpha = .79 - .82\)).

Occupational well-being. Teacher reports of emotional exhaustion (\(\alpha = .84\)) and job satisfaction (\(\alpha = .84\)).

Instructional performance. Student ratings of disturbances in lessons, high (inadequate) interaction tempo, cognitive activation, and perceived personal support (ICC1 = .20 – .39; ICC2 = .70 – .89).

Students’ motivation. Students’ perceived competence and autonomy during mathematics lessons (ICC1 = .13; ICC2 = .70).

\subsection*{Analysis Strategy:}
Latent profile analyses of the engagement and resilience subscales were used to investigate whether the four patterns proposed were identifiable in the empirical data.