

Relationship between Motivational Needs and Professional Commitment among School Teachers

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Abstract

In recent years, concerns about teachers' professional commitment have drawn increasing attention in the educational context of Punjab, Pakistan. This research has analyzed the relationship between motivational needs and professional commitment. A quantitative correlational design was used, and data were collected from 200 teachers in two districts, Lahore and Mandi Bahauddin. Motivational dimensions of need for achievement and need for affiliation were used to determine motivational needs whereas the professional commitment was measured using affective and continuance commitment. The results indicated that there is a moderate positive relationship between the motivational needs of teachers and professional commitment. Teachers who had greater motivation drives had higher chances of being more committed to their profession. Finally, motivation needs play a great role in increasing the levels of professional commitment and involvement of teachers in the school system. It is suggested that the educational leaders and policy makers should come up with the enabling measures that may include recognition programs, professional growth opportunities and incentive programs to enhance the needs of teachers in achievement and affiliation. The future study can also elaborate on other motivational aspects, and use wider geographical samples, as well as other situational variables, which could contribute to professional commitment among teachers.

Keywords: Motivational Needs; Professional Commitment; School Teacher; McClelland theory; three component model.

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Introduction

Educators are the key to the success of any educational system as their motivation and professional commitment can directly affect the quality of instruction and student performance, as well as the effectiveness of an institution. During the recent years, the question of the long-term professional commitment of teachers has been taken into more consideration, especially in the developing contexts where the pressures of workload, scarce resources, and organizational issues all lead to lower levels of engagement and high turnover intentions. Professional commitment is known to be one of the most significant psychological variables, which indicate the teacher admiration to the given profession, readiness to put their efforts into it, or desire to stay in the teaching field as a long-term occupation (Meyer & Allen, 2020). Knowledge of what contributes towards the increase in professional commitment of teachers is thus essential to the advancement of the educational outcomes as well as the teacher retention.

The motivational orientation of teachers is one of the factors that are related to commitment. This is because motivation is what dictates how people go about their work, how they hold on and the kind of fulfillment that they get out of their profession. Motivated teachers working in schools find it easier to show enthusiasm, effectiveness in instructions, and the capacity to endure stressful working conditions (Han and Yin, 2021). Motivation is not an individual construct and this is because it is made up of various needs and drives which shape professional behavior. One of the most powerful theoretical models that explain the concept of motivation is the Theory of Needs developed by McClelland that identifies achievement, affiliation, and power as the most prominent motivational needs that determine the way people work and what actions they do. The need to achieve in teaching can be associated with the instructional success and the student improvement, whereas the need to affiliate can be connected with the need to create a supportive relationship with other colleagues and students (Latham, 2019; Akram, Sewani & Ahmad, 2024).

Motivational needs apply specifically to teachers since it is a profession that needs not only personal achievement but also interpersonal communication. Teachers with high achievement motivation will have high standards, professional development and be geared towards bettering teaching methods. On the same note, strong affiliation teachers tend to appreciate collaboration, collegiality and good relations among personalities in schools. These motivational needs can be used as psychological resources which can help in enhancing stronger professional attachment and commitment in the long run. Affective and continuance are often used as conceptual frameworks of professional commitment. Affective commitment is a sense of emotional attachment and actual interest in the career, and continuance commitment is a sense of perceived costs that can arise by exiting the teaching career (Meyer & Allen, 2020; Ahmad, Noorani, & Sewani, 2025). Teachers who are more professionally committed tend to be more committed to their teaching roles, exhibit the organizational citizenship behavior, and act positively towards the school improvement efforts. On the other hand, the lack of commitment can cause disengagement, low job satisfaction, and turnover intentions, which have been one of the primary concerns on the global level (OECD, 2020).

Recent empirical studies suggest association between motivation and professional commitment in the field of education. Research shows that commitment, job engagement, and professional well-being are closely connected with intrinsic motivation and satisfaction of psychological needs of teachers (Ryan and Deci, 2020). Han and Yin (2021) emphasized that teacher motivation is a decisive indicator of long-term commitment especially in stressful workplace environments. On the same note, it has been indicated that motivational variables

like achievement striving and social belonging are important factors that influence the dedication of teachers and their long-term career persistence (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021; Oad et al., 2024). Secondary school teachers in Pakistan are confronting various professional dilemmas, such as high workloads, a lack of institutional support and the rising expectations of the performance. These situational stressors can have an impact on the motivational needs of teachers and their attachment to the teaching career. Nevertheless, as much as there is an increase in international literature on teacher motivation and commitment, there remains little research that looks specifically into the relationship of motivational needs especially achievement and affiliation needs with professional commitment among secondary school teachers in Punjab. The gap should be addressed to come up with evidence-based strategies aimed at enhancing the motivational resources and professional commitment of the teachers.

Thus, the current study studies the correlation between motivational needs and professional commitment among the teachers of Punjab, Pakistan two districts, i.e. Lahore and Mandi Bahauddin, working in the secondary schools. This paper aims to address the question of whether the motivation level of teachers whose needs are higher according to the Theory of Needs by McClelland and to the current findings on the topic of commitment in the professional activities of teachers. Based on the identification of motivation as a predictor of commitment, the study can have a potentially important implication on educational administrators, policymakers and on teacher development programs based on increasing teacher engagement, retention and professional effectiveness.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the level of motivational needs among school teachers.
2. To assess the level of professional commitment among school teachers.
3. To determine the relationship between motivational needs and professional commitment among school teachers.
4. To examine whether motivational needs significantly predict professional commitment among school teachers.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of motivational needs among school teachers?
2. What is the level of professional commitment among school teachers?
3. What is the relationship between motivational needs and professional commitment among school teachers?
4. Do motivational needs significantly predict professional commitment among school teachers?

Delimitations

1. The sample was delimited to school teachers from two districts (Lahore and Mandi Bahauddin), which may limit the generalizability of the findings.
2. Data were collected through self-report questionnaires, increasing the possibility of response bias or socially desirable answers.

Methodology

The research design adopted in this study is a quantitative correlational research design to investigate the relationship between the motivational needs and the professional commitment of school teachers. The correlational design gives the ability to evaluate the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables without controlling them. The sample was comprised of two districts of Lahore and Mandi Bahauddin in Punjab, Pakistan, 100 teachers in each district. There were both male and female teachers. Multi stage sampling was employed in the selection of teachers and was chosen on the basis of the diversity of the schools within a

district. The research utilized two tools to gather the information. The first was an adapted form of the Motivational Needs Scale created by McClelland (1985) that measures two motivational dimensions (need of achievement, and need of affiliation). The items were rated using a five-point Likert scale. The overall scale used in the current research showed that it had a good internal consistency and the Cronbach alpha was 0.752 denoting that it was reliable when measuring the teacher’s motivational needs. The second scale was the Professional commitment Scale (a modification of the Three-Component Model of Meyer and Allen (1991)) used to assess the affective, and continuance commitment. The ratings of items were also based on a five point Likert scale with 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. The scale of professional commitment used in the study was acceptable in the version adopted, with the Cronbachs alpha of = 0.784, which indicated consistency in measuring the professional commitment of the teachers. Both instruments were suitably modified as part of the teaching situation and to make them relevant to school teachers in Punjab, Pakistan. The collection of data was done using self-administered questionnaires which were sent to teachers in their respective schools. Informed consent was received by the teachers before the commencement of the study and informed consent provided was received. The questionnaires that were completed were coded and keyed into the SPSS to be analyzed statistically. Statistical analysis was done through SPSS as presented below. The alpha of Cronbach was determined to check the internal consistency of the scales. Calculation of the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum scores was done on overall motivational needs and professional commitment. The correlation analysis was done by Pearson to determine the relationship between motivational needs and professional commitment. Also, a linear regression analysis was done to establish whether the motivational needs were significant predictors of professional commitment.

Data Analysis and Results

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall Motivation	200	26.00	58.00	39.0450	6.41786
Overall Professional commitment	200	14.00	35.00	20.2650	4.33575
Valid N (listwise)	200				

The descriptive analysis showed that teachers reported moderate levels of both motivational needs and professional commitment. Motivational Needs (Overall Motivation) ranged from 26.00 to 58.00 (M = 39.05, SD = 6.42), while Professional Commitment (Overall Professional commitment) ranged from 14.00 to 35.00 (M = 20.27, SD = 4.34). These findings indicate that teachers generally exhibit meaningful levels of both constructs, providing a basis to examine their relationship.



Table 2: Correlation between motivational Needs and Professional commitment

		Need for achievement	Need for affiliation	Affective Commitment	Continuance Commitment	Overall Motivation	Overall Professional commitment
Need for achievement	Pearson Correlation	.213(**)					
Need for affiliation	Pearson Correlation	.002	.396(**)				
Affective Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.223(**)	.001	.341(**)			
Continuance Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.141(*)	.000	.227(**)	.341(**)		
Overall Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.046	.001	.000	.401(**)	.239(**)	
Overall Professional commitment	Pearson Correlation	.760(**)	.797(**)	.401(**)	.239(**)	.397(**)	
		.000	.000	.000	.001	.001	
		.226(**)	.387(**)	.844(**)	.792(**)	.397(**)	
		.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Pearson correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships among the variables. Overall Motivational Needs was positively correlated with Overall Professional Commitment ($r = 0.397, p < 0.001$), indicating that teachers with higher motivational needs tend to demonstrate higher professional commitment. Additionally, the overall scales showed strong correlations with their subcomponents: OverallM correlated with Need for Achievement ($r = 0.760$) and Need for Affiliation ($r = 0.797$), while Overall Professional commitment correlated with Affective Commitment ($r = 0.844$) and Continuance Commitment ($r = 0.792$), confirming that the computed overall scores accurately represent the underlying dimensions. These results suggest a meaningful relationship between teachers' motivational needs and their professional commitment, supporting further predictive analysis.

Table 3: Regression Coefficients for Motivational Needs Predicting Professional Commitment

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	9.797	1.744		5.618	.000
	Overall Motivation	.268	.044	.397	6.084	.000

a Dependent Variable: Overall Professional commitment

Linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether overall Motivational Needs predicted Overall Professional Commitment. The model was significant, $F(1,198) = 37.02, p < 0.001$, explaining 15.8% of the variance in professional commitment ($R^2 = 0.158$). Motivational

Needs significantly predicted professional commitment, with an unstandardized coefficient of $B = 0.268$ and a standardized coefficient of $\beta = 0.397$ ($t = 6.084$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that for every one-unit increase in motivational needs, professional commitment increases by 0.268 units, suggesting that teachers with higher motivational needs are more likely to exhibit higher professional commitment.

The descriptive analysis revealed that school teachers reported moderate levels of both motivational needs and professional commitment. Overall motivational needs ranged from 26.00 to 58.00 ($M = 39.05$, $SD = 6.42$), while professional commitment ranged from 14.00 to 35.00 ($M = 20.27$, $SD = 4.34$). These results suggest that teachers generally exhibit meaningful motivation and commitment within their profession. Pearson correlation analysis indicated a significant positive relationship between motivational needs and professional commitment ($r = 0.397$, $p < 0.001$). Teachers with higher achievement- and affiliation-related motivational needs tended to demonstrate greater affective and continuance commitment, highlighting the importance of motivation in strengthening professional attachment. Furthermore, regression analysis confirmed that motivational needs significantly predicted professional commitment ($\beta = 0.397$, $t = 6.084$, $p < 0.001$). The model was statistically significant, $F(1,198) = 37.02$, $p < 0.001$, explaining 15.8% of the variance in professional commitment ($R^2 = 0.158$). This indicates that increased motivational needs contribute significantly to higher levels of professional commitment among school teachers.

Discussion

The current study investigated the relationship between the motivational needs and the professional commitment of the school teachers. The results give an empirical analysis indicating that motivational needs of teachers, especially needs of achievement and affiliation have significant relationship with the degree of commitment to teaching profession. On the whole, the findings are revealing that motivation is a significant psychological aspect that contributes to professional commitment and long-term involvement of teachers in their activity. This is consistent with the studies that focus on motivation as one of the primary variables in deciding whether teachers will be effective, persistent, and develop their professional identities (Richardson and Watt, 2018; Watt & Richardson, 2020; Ahmad, Sewani, & Channa, 2025).

Descriptive analysis showed that the level of both motivational needs and professional commitment was moderate among the teachers. This indicates that the sampled teachers have an acceptable level of intrinsic motivation towards attaining professional goals and positive interpersonal relations. The moderate degree of commitment can be associated with the conditions in modern teaching settings, due to which teachers can encounter more and more workload demands, scarcer resources, and work-related stressors. These circumstances can determine how much teachers can remain highly motivated and committed in the long term through technical education also (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2021; Pirzada, Tabassum & Ahmad, 2024). Other research notes that long-term commitment to the teaching profession and retention may become less than ideal due to teacher stress and burnout (Madigan and Kim, 2021; Saloviita and Pakarinen, 2021). The analysis of Pearson correlation showed that there is significant positive correlation between overall motivational needs and professional commitment. This observation has the implication that educators with higher motivational needs enjoy a better chance of being committed to their career. This finding is connected to the rest of the literature that indicates the concept of motivation is at the core of influencing the engagement, persistence, and professional identity of teachers (Han and Yin, 2021; Klassen and Kim, 2019; Akram, Fatima & Ahmad, 2024). Achievement motivated teachers are inclined

to improve and create high standards of instruction as well as invest in student success (Elliot and Dweck, 2017; Ahmad, Sewani, & Fatima, 2025). On the same note, more affiliative teachers must appreciate collaboration and supportive relationships, which may strengthen their emotional attachment to teaching and their feeling of belonging to the profession (Collie, Shapka, and Perry, 2012; Veldman, van Tartwijk, Brekelmans, and Wubbels, 2016; Ahmad, Bibi, & Imran, 2023).

Regression analysis also established that motivational needs were a great predictor of professional commitment as it accounted 15.8% of the variance. The previous studies affirm motivation variables in employee commitment at workplaces, at the education level (Meyer and Allen, 1997; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky, 2002; Ahmad, Noorani, & Ali, 2024). When teachers have high motivational needs, they might view teaching as a rewarding profession that offers a chance to achieve something and engage with others, which strengthens commitment and professional commitment (Day and Gu, 2014, Ingersoll, 2018; Ahmad, Sewani & Khoso, 2024). It confirms theoretical viewpoints that include Theory of Needs by McClelland who focuses on the fact that achievement-oriented and affiliation-oriented people tend to exhibit more consistent effort and commitment in their workplaces (Latham, 2019; McClelland, 1987). High-achievement and high-affiliation motivation teachers usually aim at excellence and mastery in the instructional practice, and supportive collegial environments, respectively, which enhance commitment to the profession (Gagné et al., 2015; Faheem, Gulab, & Ahmad, 2025).

The results are also consistent with the modern motivation theories, such as the Self-Determination Theory, that prompt the relevance of psychological needs in supporting work engagement and professional well-being. Ryan and Deci (2020) postulated that when people have contentment of competence and relatedness needs, they tend to be more inclined to cultivate an intrinsic drive and dedication. Achievement motivation in teaching can be based on competence and mastery whereas the affiliation motivation is based on relatedness and social belonging. The combination of these needs can affirm the commitment and desire of teachers to stay in the field despite the difficulties (Deci, Olafsen, & Ryan, 2017; Slemp, Kern, Patrick, and Ryan, 2018; Ahmad et al., 2023; Agustina, & Mahdi, 2025).

These findings have some significant implications in the context of schools in Punjab, Pakistan. Teachers mostly have to work in a context where there are resource limitations and institutional demands that may lower the professional morale. It is postulated that school climates that are supportive, growth opportunities, and recognition systems are fundamentally important in augmenting teacher motivation and supporting commitment to the profession (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012; Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins, 2020; Kolachi et al., 2024). The motivational needs of teachers can be met by recognition, positive work relationships, and career growth, which can help increase the level of professional commitment and decrease turnover intentions (Borman and Dowling, 2008; Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas, 2019; Ahmad, Sewani & Ali, 2024; Ahmad, Anantharaman & Ismail, 2012; Ackerina, 2015).

All in all, the research is adding to the body of literature that motivational needs of teachers are positively correlated with professional commitment. The development of motivational needs can thus be a good intervention to increase teacher commitment and retention and quality of education in general. This reaffirms international fears that the motivation of teachers is the key to maintaining the enhancement of education and the stability of the workforce in the long run (OECD, 2020; UNESCO, 2021; Shah, Ali & Ahmad, 2024).

Conclusion

The study concludes that teachers' motivational needs, particularly achievement and affiliation, are positively associated with their professional commitment. Teachers with higher motivational drives were more likely to demonstrate stronger dedication and attachment to the teaching profession. Regression results further confirmed that motivational needs significantly predict professional commitment, highlighting motivation as an important factor in sustaining teachers' engagement. These findings suggest that educational administrators should foster supportive environments, recognition, and professional growth opportunities to enhance teacher motivation and commitment. However, since the study was limited to two districts and relied on self-report data, future research should include broader samples and additional contextual factors influencing teacher commitment.

Recommendations

The findings and conclusions of this study make some recommendations for improvement.

1. School administrators may set clear goals and acknowledge teachers' accomplishments to boost their motivation.
2. Schools may promote teamwork and peer support among staff to strengthen teachers' sense of belonging.
3. Policymakers may design professional development programs that support both skills and motivation.
4. Schools must ensure fair workloads, adequate resources, and a positive work culture for teachers.

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