



Ethiopian English Language Teachers' Perceptions of Their Profession and Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

This study investigated Ethiopian English teachers' perceptions of their profession and job satisfaction using surveys and interviews. While teachers reported finding significant meaning and pride in their work, a prevalent theme was the perception that the teaching profession is largely undervalued within society. Major factors contributing to potential attrition included low pay, inadequate leadership, and heavy workloads. Conversely, positive aspects identified were strong collegial support and a sense of professional fulfilment derived from teaching. The findings suggest that despite some intrinsic rewards, systemic challenges negatively impact morale and retention. The study concludes by advocating for comprehensive, systemic reforms aimed at increasing job satisfaction, improving teacher retention rates, and elevating the societal respect accorded to the teaching profession.

Keywords: Perception; Job satisfaction; Profession

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, there has been a growing global interest in understanding teacher perceptions and job satisfaction, particularly in contexts where English is taught as a foreign or second language. Teachers' professional identity, their perception of societal value, institutional support, and their own career trajectory significantly shape their engagement, performance, and persistence in the profession (Day & Gu, 2010; Kyriacou, 2001). In Ethiopia, English serves as a medium of instruction in secondary and tertiary education, placing considerable responsibility on English language teachers. However, limited research has systematically explored how these educators perceive their roles or derive satisfaction from their work within the Ethiopian educational landscape.

According to several studies conducted in sub-Saharan Africa, teachers often face professional marginalization, low pay, large class sizes, and insufficient professional development opportunities, all of which contribute to declining morale and high turnover (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; UNESCO, 2015). In Ethiopia, despite multiple education sector development programmes (ESDPs) aimed at improving teacher quality and professional status, unresolved issues persist regarding teacher morale and satisfaction, particularly among English language educators. For instance, research by Amare (2014) found that many Ethiopian teachers experience limited professional recognition and autonomy, leading to a sense of disillusionment.

In Ethiopia, where English teaching intersects with both national policy demands and sociocultural factors, understanding teacher perceptions is essential for informed decision-making in educational reform and policy development.

The primary objective of this study was to explore the perceptions of Ethiopian English language

teachers regarding their profession and to assess their levels of job satisfaction. Specifically, this research sought to: Examine how Ethiopian English language teachers perceive their professional identity and role in the education system, and identify key factors that influence job satisfaction among these teachers.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do Ethiopian English language teachers perceive their profession in terms of status, identity, and value?
2. What are the key factors affecting job satisfaction among Ethiopian English language teachers?

This research holds both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it is expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on teacher identity, professional perception, and job satisfaction, particularly in underrepresented contexts such as Ethiopia. While much of the global discourse on English language teacher development has focused on Asian and Western contexts (Richards, 2011; Farrell, 2015), there is a scarcity of empirical studies reflecting African perspectives, especially from Ethiopia. By filling this gap, the study is expected to offer insights into the socio-professional realities of English teachers in developing education systems.

The findings can inform Ethiopian educational planners and school leaders who are seeking to improve teachers' working conditions, enhance motivation, and reduce attrition. Understanding the factors that influence English language teachers' job satisfaction will assist in developing targeted interventions, teacher support programmes, and policy reforms aimed at strengthening the teaching profession. Ultimately, enhancing teacher satisfaction contributes to better educational outcomes for learners and supports national development goals by providing quality English language education.

English Language Teachers' Perceptions of their Profession in Ethiopia

Teachers' perceptions of their profession shape their commitment, identity, teaching practices, and overall engagement with students and institutions. In this context, perception refers to the subjective views that teachers hold regarding their professional roles, societal status, institutional support, and career trajectory.

In Ethiopia, perceptions of English language teachers are often shaped by multiple interrelated factors, including societal attitudes, policy directions, school leadership, and opportunities for professional development. Many teachers regard teaching as a valuable and socially meaningful career. They view themselves as agents of change, particularly in rural and disadvantaged areas, where English proficiency provides students with significant academic and economic advantages (Alemu, 2020).

However, these positive self-perceptions are frequently undermined by the broader societal undervaluing of the teaching profession. In many communities, teaching, particularly at the public-school level, is viewed as a fallback profession for individuals who were unable to secure more prestigious or lucrative jobs (Adamu, 2018; Yigzaw, 2018). This external perception directly affects how teachers see their own worth, often resulting in low morale and decreased motivation.

Furthermore, teachers' limited involvement in decision-making processes contributes to feelings of disempowerment. According to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), autonomy is a core need for professional satisfaction. When teachers feel they have little control over curricula, instructional methods, or school policies, their professional identity diminishes, which reduces motivation and increases the risk of burnout.

The hierarchical and bureaucratic nature of the Ethiopian educational system often restricts opportunities for teacher input and participation. Many educators express frustration at being treated as passive implementers of centrally designed programmes rather than as professionals with valuable insights (Getachew & Tesfaye, 2017). These perceptions are particularly prevalent among early-career teachers and those working in under-resourced schools.

Moreover, Kelbisa (2021) emphasizes that teachers' professional identities are not static but shaped by interactions with educational policies, students, and school communities. Teachers continually negotiate their sense of self within the constraints of their working environments. Day and Gu (2010) also emphasize that professional identity is vital to teachers' motivation and resilience, particularly in systems

undergoing reform or instability.

Despite the challenges, some English language teachers maintain a strong sense of professional purpose. They take pride in helping students acquire life-changing skills and remain optimistic about their roles as educators. However, for this intrinsic motivation to be sustainable, systemic reforms are essential to enhance the professional image of teaching in Ethiopia.

Job Satisfaction Among Ethiopian English Language Teachers

Job satisfaction for Ethiopian English language teachers is shaped not merely by surface-level working conditions but by a complex interaction of personal expectations, institutional structures, and cultural narratives surrounding the teaching profession. While individual experiences vary, there are consistent systemic factors that restrict the full professional engagement and satisfaction of these educators. Understanding these factors is vital, not only to retain teachers but also to improve educational outcomes nationally.

Job satisfaction, in its broadest sense, encompasses emotional, cognitive, and evaluative responses to one's job. It is not a fixed state but rather an ongoing negotiation between what teachers hope their work will be and what it actually involves. In Ethiopia, the gap between aspiration and reality is often substantial.

The Disconnect Between Purpose and Practice

Most English teachers enter the profession with a clear sense of purpose. They believe in the transformative power of language, particularly in a multilingual country where English opens doors to higher education, employment, and global discourse. However, once within the system, many teachers discover that bureaucratic pressures, limited autonomy, and inadequate working conditions hinder their ability to teach meaningfully.

This disconnect leads to what Dinham and Scott (2000) call "*core dissatisfaction*", where teachers are not unhappy with the act of teaching itself, but with the systems that constrain it. It is especially true in the Ethiopian context, where rigid curricula, a lack of instructional support, and excessive administrative tasks undermine the teacher's instructional role.

Emotional Labour and Lack of Recognition

Teaching demands constant emotional regulation, managing students' needs, maintaining classroom energy, and often absorbing the emotional consequences of underfunded schools and underprepared learners. This emotional labour is rarely acknowledged, yet it contributes significantly to burnout and disillusionment.

Ethiopian teachers often express frustration about their efforts being overlooked, particularly when schools fail to recognize individual commitment or achievement. Recognition does not need to be monetary; simple acts of acknowledgement from school leaders, communities, or the system can significantly boost morale. The lack of these symbolic rewards exacerbates feelings of professional invisibility and gradually diminishes job satisfaction.

School Leadership and Collegial Relations

While much attention is given to salary and resources, the role of school leadership is often underestimated. A supportive and communicative principal can buffer the effects of a challenging environment. Conversely, authoritarian or disengaged leadership worsens job dissatisfaction.

In Ethiopia, hierarchical administrative structures often marginalize teachers from decision-making processes. This lack of voice contradicts what Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) identifies as a core human need—autonomy. When teachers are viewed as implementers rather than professionals, their motivation tends to wane. Teachers consistently report that being excluded from policy, curriculum, and planning discussions makes them feel undervalued and disempowered (Kelbisa, 2021).

Equally important are peer relationships. Collegiality can serve as a protective factor, enabling teachers to share burdens and maintain a connection to their purpose. When schools promote collaboration instead of competition, teachers are more likely to feel satisfied and committed.

The Role of Compensation

Salary matters, but not in isolation. What is more significant is fairness in how compensation relates to workload, performance, and societal value. Ethiopian English teachers, particularly in urban areas, report that their salaries are insufficient not only for personal survival but also for maintaining professional dignity (UNESCO, 2022). When salaries are delayed or inconsistent, this indignity is exacerbated.

Furthermore, the lack of non-monetary incentives, such as housing allowances, recognition awards, or opportunities for advancement, sends a message that the profession is not worthy of investment. Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964) elucidates this well: if effort is not perceived to lead to a reward, motivation and, by extension, satisfaction plummets.

Professional Development as Empowerment or Burden

The promise of professional development is growth and renewed motivation. However, in Ethiopia, many English teachers find the reality disappointing. Workshops are often one-size-fits-all, theoretical, or led by facilitators who are disconnected from the realities of the classroom. This reduces professional development to a bureaucratic checkbox, rather than a space for pedagogical renewal.

When meaningful training is accessible—especially when it is ongoing, reflective, and linked to promotion it can serve as a powerful motivator. However, the current system too often separates training from actual career progression, thereby diminishing its impact (Tadesse & Melese, 2022).

Personal Fulfilment and Student Relationships

Despite systemic barriers, many Ethiopian teachers continue to find satisfaction in their direct impact on students. Helping students improve their English, pursue higher education, or gain confidence in expression remains a significant source of deep fulfilment. This intrinsic reward often sustains teachers in environments where extrinsic support is lacking.

However, intrinsic motivation is not inexhaustible. Without structural support, even the most passionate educators can burn out. Teachers need more than inner drive—they need environments that validate and reinforce their efforts.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to explore and synthesize various models of bilingual education. The design aimed to examine their pedagogical characteristics and educational outcomes by reviewing published empirical studies. The SLR method was chosen to allow the identification of patterns, comparisons across contexts, and research gaps in bilingual education models. To maintain a rigorous and transparent review process, this study adopted the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to structure each phase of the review process, including identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, specifically utilizing a convergent parallel approach. In this model, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously, analyzed independently, and then integrated during interpretation.

This design was chosen because it was thought to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. While the quantitative component provides measurable insights into trends and relationships among variables, such as job satisfaction, location, and teaching experience, the qualitative component enriches the analysis by exploring teachers' personal narratives and the contextual factors that shape these trends.

By combining these approaches, the study achieved methodological triangulation, which enhances the credibility, validity, and richness of the findings, particularly considering the multifaceted nature of job satisfaction and professional identity.

Research Target/Subject

The study investigated English language teachers employed in secondary schools across selected urban and rural areas of Ethiopia, using a sequential mixed-methods design to capture both breadth and depth. In the quantitative phase, a stratified random sampling technique was used to select a representative sample of approximately 150–200 English teachers, with stratification by school location (urban versus rural) and by gender to ensure that key demographic and geographic differences were reflected; this procedure was intended to enhance the external validity of the results and to permit cautious generalization to the wider population of secondary English teachers. In the qualitative phase, a purposive subsample of roughly 15–20 teachers was drawn from the survey respondents according to criteria such as level of job satisfaction, years of teaching experience, gender, and geographic location, thereby guaranteeing maximum variation and enabling the exploration of contrasting and underrepresented perspectives (for example, rural versus urban contexts and high- versus low-satisfaction cases). By combining stratified random sampling in the quantitative stage, which increases representativeness and statistical power, with purposive sampling for in-depth interviews, which ensures inclusion of salient, diverse viewpoints, the study achieved methodological complementarity that strengthens both the generalizability and the explanatory richness of its findings.

Research Procedure

The research followed a mixed-methods approach, employing a convergent parallel design in which both quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously, analyzed independently, and then integrated during interpretation. This design allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the complex nature of job satisfaction and professional identity among Ethiopian secondary school English language teachers.

In the quantitative phase, a stratified random sampling technique was used to select approximately 150–200 English language teachers from secondary schools located in both urban and rural areas. The stratification was based on school location and gender to ensure representation of key demographic and geographic characteristics. This method increased the external validity of the findings and supported generalization to a broader population.

Following the survey, the qualitative phase involved semi-structured interviews with a purposive subsample of 15–20 teachers drawn from the survey participants. Selection criteria included level of job satisfaction, years of teaching experience, gender, and geographical location. This purposive sampling ensured maximum variation in the data, allowing for the inclusion of diverse and contrasting perspectives—such as rural versus urban contexts and high versus low satisfaction levels. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative phases strengthened the study through methodological triangulation, enhancing the credibility and depth of the results.

Instruments and Data Collection Techniques

Two main instruments were used in the data collection process: a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide.

The survey questionnaire was designed to gather quantitative data on teachers' perceptions and satisfaction levels. It employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree", which allowed respondents to express degrees of agreement or disagreement. The questionnaire was divided into three key sections:

1. Perceptions of the Teaching Profession: assessing teachers' views on social respect, professional identity, fulfilment, and commitment.
2. Job Satisfaction: addressing indicators such as salary, workload, administrative support, opportunities for professional development, and relationships with colleagues and students.
3. Challenging Factors: exploring contextual variables, including school location, teaching resources, gender-based challenges, emotional well-being, and stress levels.

For the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the purposively selected teachers. An interview guide ensured consistency while allowing flexibility to explore personal experiences in depth. Key themes included motivations for joining the teaching profession, experiences with leadership and policy implementation, professional development, emotional well-being, gender disparities, and rural–urban inequalities. This method allowed participants to elaborate on their lived experiences and discuss sensitive or complex issues that could not be fully captured through the survey alone.

All data collection adhered to strict ethical protocols. Participants provided informed consent, were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and were reminded of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Data security measures were also implemented to protect participants' identities and maintain research integrity.

Data analysis technique

Data analysis was conducted in two complementary stages: quantitative and qualitative, corresponding to the mixed-methods design.

For the quantitative data, responses from the survey were coded and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics (such as means, standard deviations, and frequencies) were used to summarize teachers' overall perceptions and levels of job satisfaction. Inferential analyses (such as t-tests or ANOVA) examined relationships between key variables, including gender, school location, and years of teaching experience. These statistical procedures helped identify significant patterns and differences among subgroups, providing a general overview of the factors influencing job satisfaction.

For the qualitative data, interview transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis following the framework of Braun and Clarke (2006). The process involved several steps: data familiarization, generation of initial codes, identification of recurring themes, and refinement of thematic categories. Emerging themes were interpreted in relation to the quantitative findings, offering deeper insights into the contextual and emotional dimensions of teachers' experiences.

Finally, the results from both phases were integrated during interpretation to achieve a holistic understanding of the research problem. Convergences and divergences between quantitative trends and qualitative narratives were examined to enhance the validity and depth of the conclusions, reflecting the principles of methodological triangulation and complementarity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the study's findings, organized into two core research themes that directly address the research questions posed in this study. Each section integrates quantitative summaries, qualitative excerpts, and a comprehensive discussion relating the findings to existing literature.

1. Perceptions of the Teaching Profession
2. Job Satisfaction Levels

Perceptions of the Teaching Profession

This section addresses Research Question 1: How do Ethiopian English language teachers perceive their profession in terms of status, identity, and value? The findings presented below illustrate a complex interplay between teachers' intrinsic motivation and the extrinsic realities of their profession.

Table 1 Teachers' Perceptions of the Profession (N = 180)

Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
I feel proud to be an English teacher.	71.4	20.2	8.4
Teaching English is a meaningful profession.	66.3	22.5	11.2
The teaching profession is respected in Ethiopian society.	38.2	25.6	36.2
I would recommend teaching as a career to others.	37.8	21	41.2

Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
I often think about leaving the profession. (Reverse-scored)	52.1	19.3	28.6

As illustrated in Table 1, the vast majority of English language teachers (71.4%) expressed pride in their professional identity, with a significant two-thirds (66.3%) also affirming that teaching English is a meaningful profession. These quantitative findings strongly suggest a robust internal justification and intrinsic motivation among Ethiopian English language teachers, even in the face of various challenges. It aligns with Day and Qing (2009), who underscore professional pride as a critical factor sustaining teacher motivation in demanding contexts.

Qualitative data further elucidated the depth of this intrinsic connection. Teachers frequently articulated a profound emotional and existential attachment to their work:

"I have always felt that teaching English is an integral part of my life. It makes my life purposeful and meaningful." Interviewee #5

The perceived meaningfulness was often directly linked to their impact on students' futures, particularly in a context where English proficiency provides significant academic and economic advantages. Interviewee #2 highlighted this:

"When I see my students use the English language or pass national exams, I feel proud of them and myself because their success makes me think that I have made a significant contribution to their success." Interviewee #2

It demonstrates that despite external pressures, teachers derive substantial satisfaction from their direct pedagogical impact. This assertion is consistent with Dinham and Scott (2000), who posit that a sense of making a meaningful contribution can be a powerful motivator, often temporarily outweighing material dissatisfactions. These findings collectively highlight that, at an individual level, Ethiopian English teachers largely perceive their role as personally fulfilling and socially vital, forming a core component of their professional identity.

In striking contrast to their personal pride, the quantitative results for Item 3 reveal that only 38.2% of teachers believe the teaching profession is respected in Ethiopian society. This significant discrepancy between internal perception and external societal valuation is a critical finding, echoing broader concerns in low- and middle-income countries where teachers are frequently undervalued despite their foundational societal role (VSO Ethiopia, 2011).

Qualitative insights vividly illustrate teachers' disillusionment regarding societal perception:

"We are not respected by most of our students and their parents, and the society as a whole. People think teaching is the least preferred profession, and those who become teachers are those who found themselves unfit for other professions." Interviewee #4

This sentiment highlights a pervasive societal narrative that views teaching as a "fallback" career rather than a prestigious calling, as also noted by Adamu (2018) and Yigzaw (2018). Such external perceptions can profoundly undermine teachers' self-worth and motivation, despite their intrinsic commitment.

Further reinforcing this disconnect, only 37.8% of teachers stated that they would recommend teaching as a career to others (Item 4), with 41.2% explicitly stating that they would not. This is a crucial indicator that, despite personal fulfilment, many teachers do not perceive the profession as offering a viable, rewarding, or sustainable long-term career path for others. As Interviewee #9 put it:

"Despite all the hurdles, I am happy to be a teacher, but to be honest, I would not advise any other person to take up the teaching career." Interviewee #9

This finding highlights a significant challenge for teacher recruitment and retention in Ethiopia. While current educators may persevere due to their intrinsic drive, the low willingness to recommend the profession suggests systemic issues that deter potential new entrants and could lead to future attrition. It

underscores that personal meaning alone cannot fully compensate for perceived low societal status and potential career limitations.

The response to the last item also reveals a stunning finding: more than half of the respondents are considering leaving the profession. This reflects widespread desperation, hopelessness, and instability. It also confirms that intrinsic motivation alone is not enough to sustain long-term retention. In the qualitative data, one interviewee disclosed her feelings as follows.

"The only thing keeping me here is my love for the profession and my family. However, I sometimes ask myself how long I can live like this." Interviewee #6

Similar trends have been reported in Tadesse and Melese (2020), who found that Ethiopian teachers have high attrition intentions due to excessive workload, emotional stress, and a lack of recognition.

The findings reveal a complex and somewhat contradictory perception of the teaching profession among Ethiopian English teachers. On one hand, there is a strong sense of intrinsic motivation and perceived meaningfulness in their work. These internal drivers align with prior research by Day and Qing (2009), who highlight the role of personal and emotional engagement in sustaining teacher motivation. Similarly, Dinham and Scott (2000) affirm that a sense of meaningful contribution can often outweigh external dissatisfaction, at least in the short term.

However, despite this personal fulfilment, the majority of teachers do not seem to believe that their profession is respected in Ethiopian society, and fewer than 40% would recommend teaching as a career. This disconnect between internal motivation and external respect reflects a common issue in low- and middle-income countries, where teachers are often underappreciated despite their critical societal role (VSO Ethiopia, 2011). The qualitative data further underscores this disillusionment, as teachers express their disappointment with how they are perceived by students, parents, and the wider community.

Most concerning is that over half of the respondents are considering leaving the profession. This suggests a significant problem that intrinsic motivation alone cannot resolve. Consistent with Tadesse and Melese (2020), who reported high attrition intentions among Ethiopian teachers due to stress and poor working conditions, this study suggests that job dissatisfaction and societal disregard may ultimately outweigh internal commitment.

Teachers' Job Satisfaction

This section addresses Research Question 2. The findings presented below comprise both quantitative and qualitative data.

Table 2 Summary of Teachers' Job Satisfaction Dimensions (N = 180)

Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Summary of Teachers' Job Satisfaction Dimensions (N = 180)	78.6	14.2	7.2
I feel a sense of professional accomplishment..	65.1	21.8	13.1
I feel a sense of professional accomplishment.	40.4	25.3	34.3
My current salary is satisfactory.	27.1	18.6	54.3
My workload is manageable.	45.3	20.5	34.2
I have access to professional development opportunities.	35.7	24.1	40.2

Table 2 presents the percentage of teachers who agreed, were neutral, or disagreed with various statements reflecting dimensions of job satisfaction. The quantitative data are summarised below, followed by qualitative insights that expand on these findings.

As shown in Table 2 above, 78.6% of the respondents reported having good relationships with their colleagues. The data reveal that a significant majority of teachers have a positive outlook on their relationships with peers. This suggests that collegial bonds serve as a central source of emotional support and professional satisfaction. As one participant shared:

"We laugh, share our happiness and sorrow, teach together, and offer whatever we possess. We are like family members, where there is a strong sense of belonging and togetherness." Interviewee #1

This sentiment highlights the importance of teamwork and community, particularly in demanding work environments. As highlighted by Dinham & Scott (2000), strong peer relationships can sustain teacher morale even in the absence of institutional support.

In response to the second item, 65.1% of teachers reported experiencing a sense of professional accomplishment. In other words, a significant majority of teachers indicated feeling a sense of professional accomplishment. Therefore, it can be concluded that the fact that two-thirds of teachers feel accomplished highlights the emotional rewards of teaching, particularly when students succeed. This is crucial in contexts where material and institutional rewards are limited. Teachers perceive their success mirrored in their students' progress, which sustains them.

Such feelings were also mentioned in the interview, indicating that despite challenges, intrinsic motivation remains a strong driver for many teachers. One respondent remarked, "Teaching students a global language is immeasurably rewarding. It makes us ignore some of the difficulties." A passion for teaching remains a key reason why educators continue in the profession despite financial and institutional challenges. Another teacher said:

"When I see some tangible progress in my students' English and when they achieve commendable results in class and national exams, I feel proud of myself and my colleagues, even if the number of such high achievers may be low." Interviewee #10

This finding aligns with Herzberg's intrinsic motivators, such as achievement and recognition, as central to job satisfaction.

Unlike the responses to the first two items, those to the remaining five items shed light on the dimensions in which the teaching profession is most dissatisfied. For example, only about 40% of respondents felt satisfied with the leadership support, indicating that nearly one-third of the teachers find leadership engagement lacking. This may reflect inadequate communication, limited recognition, or minimal involvement in decision-making processes. The following provides hints for this.

"We see our principal only when there are some problems or conflicts. They do not know what we go through." Interviewee #13

This supports Kassahun (2019), who emphasized that school leadership quality directly affects teacher motivation and retention.

Item 4 had the highest level of dissatisfaction, with over half of the respondents unhappy with their salary. This suggests that compensation is a critical source of discontent, which can impact motivation and retention.

Interviews provided more profound insights into teachers' experiences. Many educators voiced concerns over salary limitations, with one participant stating, "I like teaching, but financial constraints and difficulties make us feel like quitting the profession." This sentiment was echoed by several respondents who felt that compensation did not align with the expectations placed upon them.

"Our salary is so meagre that it hardly covers house rent and basic living expenses. If we did not give tutors in the evenings, it would have been impossible for most of us to survive." Interviewee #3

The responses to item 4, which asked about workload manageability, indicate that while a fair portion of teachers believe their workload is manageable, over a third disagree. This may reflect excessive administrative tasks, large class sizes, or pressure from curriculum demands, which can contribute to stress and burnout.

During the interviews, workload stress was a frequently mentioned issue. One teacher explained, *"I spend more time on markings and administrative duties than actual teaching. This affects the quality of my lessons."* Another respondent said, *"I have five classes a day, each with over 40 students. I do not even have time to mark their assignments."*

Disparities between urban and rural teachers also emerged as a significant theme. Urban teachers frequently mentioned classroom overcrowding and workload intensity, while rural teachers highlighted resource shortages. One rural teacher noted, *"We lack basic materials, which makes lesson delivery difficult. However, smaller class sizes allow for more individual attention."* This suggests that policy interventions should be tailored to address location-specific concerns.

Again, just over one-third of respondents reported having meaningful access to professional growth. That is, Access to professional development is another concern, with 40.2% expressing dissatisfaction. This may impact teachers' growth, innovation, and sense of progression in their careers. The urban-rural gap was clear: rural teachers reported being excluded from most training sessions.

"In service trainings and other programmes, they usually give priority to urban teachers. No one thinks about how we will get there or whether we are invited." Interviewee #7

This supports Tessema (2006), who emphasized the inequitable distribution of CPD opportunities in Ethiopia. The findings illustrate a complex picture: while collegiality and intrinsic motivation (such as a sense of accomplishment) appear to buffer against dissatisfaction, critical systemic issues persist. The highest dissatisfaction rates are linked to salary, leadership support, and access to professional development. Addressing these areas is vital for improving overall teacher morale and retention.

This study set out to explore the perceptions of Ethiopian secondary school English language teachers regarding their profession and levels of job satisfaction, as well as the factors influencing that satisfaction. A mixed-methods convergent parallel design was employed, integrating quantitative data from Likert-scale surveys with qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the perceptions and job satisfaction of Ethiopian secondary school English language teachers, revealing a complex interplay between strong intrinsic motivation and weak systemic support. The findings indicate that while teachers possess a deep professional commitment and take pride in their role as educators, they continue to face significant challenges related to low remuneration, inadequate recognition, and limited opportunities for professional growth. Teachers' sense of fulfilment primarily stems from their relationships with students and colleagues rather than from institutional structures, underscoring the lack of systemic reinforcement for their intrinsic motivation. Persistent issues such as emotional burnout, poor leadership, and disparities in access to continuous professional development—especially between rural and urban areas—further exacerbate dissatisfaction and hinder professional advancement. These findings highlight the need for structural reforms that align institutional support with teachers' commitment and dedication. Strengthening school leadership, ensuring equitable resource distribution, and enhancing teacher recognition at both local and national levels are essential measures for sustaining teacher motivation and improving educational outcomes.

Despite its valuable insights, the study acknowledges several limitations, including its reliance on self-reported data, restricted regional coverage, and cross-sectional design, which limit the generalisability of the findings across the entire Ethiopian education system. Nevertheless, the results contribute meaningfully to understanding teacher motivation and job satisfaction in resource-constrained contexts. Future research should adopt longitudinal and gender-focused approaches, examine the influence of teacher training institutions, and evaluate the effectiveness of current professional development initiatives to provide a more dynamic and comprehensive picture of teachers' evolving professional experiences. Overall, the study reinforces that improving teachers' working conditions and recognizing their contributions are crucial for fostering a sustainable and motivated teaching workforce capable of advancing the quality of education in Ethiopia.

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